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It's not easy to change the habits of a nation.

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William Wiser

Country Music

FOR A LONG TIME the Navy would not let Negroes be anything but steward mates: they served as messboys in the officers' wardroom, or worked in the ship's laundry. All of that has changed. Many are now in engineering divisions—or gunnery, or fire control. There is only one black sailor aboard the *USS Halstead*; his name is Littlejohn, and he is striking for quartermaster.

During working hours Littlejohn mostly chips paint with the deck force—for they are short-handed—but as a quartermaster striker he has been taught the points of the compass and the difference between cirrus and cirro-cumulus clouds. Tonight he is in the wheel-house standing midwatch as messenger to Mister Walker, officer-of-the-watch—allowed to make coffee and wear a pair of earphones. From time to time the forward lookout reports a light on the horizon, and Littlejohn relays the bearing to Mister Walker.

Midwatch is said to be the longest and lonesomest watch there is. Sailors swap tales to make the time pass: tales of girls they have known; monumental drinking bouts they have staged. These tales are known as "sea stories," and you can believe them or not. A sailor's yarn—no matter how exaggerated or far-fetched—makes the monotonous hours of a long watch pass. Littlejohn listens closely to every tale they have to tell, but he has never told one of his own. He is new to the ship, and not long in the Navy; if he told a sea story he might tell about the time a white woman drove him all around Copper Basin County, in a red car, and made him sit in the front seat, and bought a pistol from him for twenty-five dollars—which is just as unlikely as most of the tales he has heard. But there is no point to that story, nor any ending to it, so he does not tell it.

"Hey Littlejohn," says the helmsman, "play us some music, why don't you?"

Littlejohn keeps a harmonica down in the flag bag, and plays sometimes.

"We are on radio silence," says Mister Walker.

The ship is bound for Vieques, in Puerto Rico; it is a simulated wartime operation, and tonight the ship is on practice radio silence.

"He's not going to go on the radio," says Bailey, QM 1, Littlejohn's division P.O.

"You'd be surprised how sound travels across water," says Mister Walker, who is fresh out of Annapolis.

All his life Littlejohn has found himself between whites wanting him to do something different.

"He'll play soft," says the helmsman, "Sir."

The helmsman is from South Carolina, and favours country music. There are a good many southern boys aboard the *Halstead*, and Littlejohn knows how to play the kind of music they like. With his harmonica he can mimic everything from a yodel to a death rattle—Nashville style, West Texas or what have you. Littlejohn knows a lot more music than the southern boys suspect, but on board the *Halstead* he plays country music.

"Permission granted," says Mister Walker, who is a stickler for terminology—and has learned at Annapolis not to alienate your enlisted man.

Littlejohn gives his headset to the relief helmsman and goes out to the signal bridge to get his harmonica out of the flag bag.

As soon as he is back the helmsman asks for *Who Was That Dude I Saw You With Last Night?*, but Bailey wants him to play *The Sincerest Story Ever Told.*

When you cannot please everybody, a

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white man named Trace once told him (he was a drinking man, and took a drink whenever he felt like it), you might as well please yourself. All his life Littlejohn has been at the beck and call of whites, and they are always calling out opposite orders. Littlejohn has just learned that there are 32 points on the mariner's compass, divided into 360 degrees, and he believes he has travelled every one of those directions trying to do what whites want. Only just lately was he getting to where he wanted to go his own way for a change.

What he would do, he would play them some music that wasn't one tune or the other, a song of his own he made up himself. They will not know the difference. The song is called *Nigger Don't Let the Sun Set on Your Head in Copper Basin County*—but naturally he does not give out the name of the piece he is about to play. It is all country music to them.

NOT THAT MANY PEOPLE around town recognised him. Negroes are rare in this part of Tennessee, but a black boy growing up here goes mostly unnoticed: the white sailor suit was what caught people's attention.

But just about every face was a familiar one to Franklin—even if he could not put a name to it—and he stepped off the Smoky Mountain Trailways bus with a fearful heart to see this same street again, with the same people walking it. He was perspiring under his white Navy hat, but too scared to take it off and cool himself. The hat represented the government. It was a charm to ward off those farmers leaning out of pickup trucks, with faces fierce as turkeys, and big strapping country boys lounging around town. The hat showed Franklin belonged to the Navy now—was government property, in fact—and Watershed had best leave him be.

Franklin carried a set of leave papers in his canvas bag and a harmonica in the front pocket of his jumper, where sailors generally carry their cigarettes. He touched the harmonica out of nervousness and started down Depot Street to the part of town known as Summit. He gritted his teeth and fastened his eyes straight ahead; he had made up his mind not to step off the sidewalk into the gutter as he used to do when he was little—and folks did seem to make a path for him.

Then, when he heard somebody behind him say, "I swear if that ain't the Tolliver nigger," it felt like a shotgun aimed at the back of his neck. But he walked on, and the only outright threat made was a spotted hound that ran out of the barbershop to bark at him—but in a foolish way, and more at the uniform than at Franklin.

Passing the Baptist Church Franklin's hands and feet went cold, hot as it was. He was thinking about Billie Jean Ellis who played piano for the church choir—did she still?

Franklin had worked part time at the church too—doing odd jobs for pocket money. He remembered sitting on the parsonage steps once, playing his harmonica. The preacher came out and saw him and said, "That's right, son, make a joyful noise unto the Lord." Nobody had ever called him "son" before. He tried to like the preacher after that—though he had never been allowed to attend a church service, or step inside the church of a Sunday—only weekdays, to do the floors and polish pews and carry last Sunday's dead flowers off the altar. The preacher's wife once gave him a cold leftover waffle she said "would only go to waste," and stood by to watch him eat it.

Another time he came within an inch of getting bit by a black widow spider, pulling up a rotted-out stump in the churchyard. Here he was thinking about Billie Jean Ellis and a black widow spider at the same time, feeling cold all over.

WATERSHED WAS BUILT on the side of a hill and every street lengthwise, from city limit to cemetery, was higher than the one before. The connecting streets ran up and down hill at a steep angle. Franklin climbed one of these, called Grandview Drive, to get to Summit by a back way.

Grandview Drive, Franklin recalled, was the way he had followed Laudermilk home, that time. One evening Franklin took it in his head to follow the crippled beggar home. (This made him think he might have been followed himself, right now, and he glanced backwards over the town along the tar roofs going downhill like steps, but the only soul in sight was harmless old Mr Culpepper, out sprinkling his lawn.)

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"Howdy, sailor," said Mr Culpepper, who was Commander of the American Legion Post in Watershed, and took an interest in things military.

"How do, Mister Culpepper."

Mr Culpepper was startled to hear himself called by name by a black sailor he did not know from Adam. He almost sprinkled his shoetops squinting and trying to figure out who Franklin could be.

When Franklin followed Laudermilk home that time he went slow about it, for the beggar's legs were cut off at the hip, and he had to navigate the streets on a wooden platform with roller-skate wheels nailed to it, pushing himself along with railroad gloves. *Laudermilk used to play a mouth organ on* Saturdays in front of the Five & Dime downtown. He kept his cap laid out upside down on the street curb beside him, where people dropped money. It was said that Laudermilk slept in that old cracked open mausoleum in the cemetery with MOWBERRY carved into the marble. There was even talk of evicting him, if he really did sleep there, but nobody ever got around to investigating; anyway, there were no living descendants of the Mowberrys left to complain.

Franklin had been half afraid of the beggar —there was something fierce in the set of Laudermilk's mouth—but he dearly wanted to hear that harmonica up close. Sometimes at night you could hear mouth-organ music coming out of the cemetery. In town, Franklin knew better than to linger too long in front of the Five & Dime where Laudermilk played. White people would not tolerate a black boy hanging around a place where they congregated. So he decided to follow Laudermilk home, and listen to him from somewhere out of sight in the cemetery.

Franklin was only nine then, and Grandview Drive was steeper than it is now. The way Laudermilk dealt with it was to crisscross all the way up, like a spider working a web. He used his arms as a kind of catapult so as to hop right over patches of gravel that were too loose and slippery to roll over with a roller-skate platform. He was a young fellow, for a beggar, with a big chest and thick arms from pushing himself along on a platform all his life. Franklin followed from a considerable distance, but crisscrossed Grandview the very same way Laudermilk did.

Now, as Franklin came to the path that ran between the new cemetery and the old, he saw himself the way he was back then, scrambling up the hillside drive to try and sneak up on a crippled harmonica player, to hear him play.

From this side of Summit Franklin could see the courthouse, with a flag flying from the dome. It was made out of Tennessee marble from a quarry not ten miles away. In fact, marble was so plentiful around the county that folks used it for porch steps instead of wood or cement, and even little cabins out in the hills—with weatherbeaten shingles blown apart in places like a deck of cards—had marble porch steps.

Behind the courthouse was the jail, with a marble front but cinder block in back. That was where Trace had set up his dental office, with all his equipment, and where you had to go to get your teeth fixed. At first it was a joke, but folks around town finally got used to it and by now thought nothing of it. People will get used to anything. Look at how Franklin had come back after two years and was something to stare at in his Navy suit, but in two days' time they would be used to him again and put him out of their minds. However, Franklin did not intend to stay around as long as that.

THE WAY TRACE had come to have his office at the jail was on account of being arrested for drunkenness all the time—Copper Basin County is dry. (For years Trace got his bootleg whiskey from the garbage man, who would empty the garbage can on to his truck, then discreetly slip a pint bottle into the empty can before he put the lid back on.) So it was that Trace ended up in a jail cell, time and time again, the morning after. They have to keep a drunk a full twenty-four hours after an arrest, even if his name is Tolliver.

Mrs Stiles, the jailer's wife, swore by him. Trace had done extensive root canal work on her, and she claimed he was rough, but skilful, and she could chew like a beaver when he finished with her. It was she who thought up letting Trace operate out of a jail cell, though a privileged one—with no bars, and his own sink, for the name Tolliver still meant something in Tennessee (even if one of the brothers was a drunk and the

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other one peculiar)—so the Lions Club voted on it, and approved. At first it was something of a joke to say, "I am on my way to the jail to get my teeth fixed," but by and by it was no more thought of than if Trace still kept his office downtown over the barbershop.

Franklin's spine stiffened when he remembered how he had to inch by those jail cells, flattened against the far wall, to keep out of reach of drunken country boys, mean ones, locked up. If Mrs Stiles was around it was all right: she was noted for being hard as nails (she carried a blackjack in her apron pocket), but more often than not she was in her kitchen making dinner for the prisoners.

Franklin had to run down to the jail whenever there was a telephone message for Trace—all his calls came through the home phone at the Tolliver place. Franklin ran back and forth relaying messages. When he came to the jail he had to try and slide by the cells without somebody catching him by the sleeve or the back of his britches. If they caught him they could squeeze him up against the bars and hurt him.

"Was you looking cross-eyed at me, penned up in here?"

"If you don't run get me a pack of cigarettes right quick I'll cut your ears off when I get out of here!"

Just good old boys, everybody said, but wild. To Franklin they were devils, pure and simple. He had dreams about what they would do to him if they caught him.

Then Franklin's big trouble came along when he was fifteen, and went over to the jail one time to take Trace's mail to him. Without thinking to knock, he walked straight into the little office-cell. There was Billie Jean Ellis sitting in the dentist chair, rolling her silk stockings down. She had already peeled her clothes off to the waist, like a banana peeled halfway down—her smooth bare skin just as white as the inside of a banana, too. Trace was circling Billie Jean like a honeybee, his white dentist jacket off and his suspenders down. When he saw Franklin he pulled them back up. Everybody froze dead still for a second. Billie Jean Ellis made no move to cover herself with the blouse lying in her lap, her big wide mouth open in a silly smile—but Trace gave Franklin a hard look he'd not likely forget. Franklin dropped letters all over the floor backing out of there.

HERE WAS THE VERY same path Franklin followed Laudermilk down, cemeteries on two sides. The path, when you got past the cemetery, used to be a popular lover's lane with the young people—but that was before everybody took to courting in automobiles.

The biggest stone in the "new" cemetery was the Tolliver monument, and beside it the two plots: *Martin B.* and *Clara M.* Clara M. was old Mrs Tolliver who halfway brought Franklin up, before she died. She took the trouble to teach him to read—for the nearest Coloured school was over thirty miles away—and when Mrs Tolliver died, Lionel took up Franklin's lessons where she left off. People who knew the family said the Tolliver nigger would likely turn out to be the best-educated darky in Tennessee, for the Tollivers were all smart people.

One time Mrs Tolliver said to him, "The name Franklin means 'free man'—please think upon that when you feel oppressed, that it may prove your heart's balm." Franklin had thought of it several times since, but it had never proved his heart's balm in the least.

Mrs Tolliver had cared more for books than people. She would read out in her hammock on the verandah till the light got too poor to see by and it got too cool to sit out. Then she would take up her cane (she had heart trouble, and dizzy spells) and come in, and Franklin would lay a fire for her and take her bottle down from the kitchen cabinet. She always had a toddy of Southern Comfort, with a sugar cube in it, before supper. She was kindly, but not close. She was not even close to her own two boys. When she died Lionel took all her books to a back room at the courthouse, where they made a library out of them, known as the Clara M. Tolliver Memorial Library to this day.

The two plots left beside the Tolliver stone were for Lionel and Trace.

On the other side of the path, in the "old" cemetery, was that same mausoleum marked MOWBERRY—about to cave in, all grown over with cudzew—where Laudermilk was said to sleep. Franklin never saw him again after the day he followed him home.

That time, the minute Laudermilk got to the cemetery gate, he spun around on his little platform and fixed his eye on Franklin.

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"Where you going, boy?"

"Nowheres."

"You following me?"

Franklin did not answer.

Laudermilk took the harmonica out of his shirt pocket, the same place where Franklin carried his now. There was a crafty smile on Laudermilk's face.

"You wished you could play one, don't you?"

"I just like to hear it played."

"You wished you could play one, too."

"Yes sir," said Franklin.

This made Laudermilk smile all the more.

"Well you never in your life will get to. A nigger's got too thick a lip to play one."

THE RAINFALL in Copper Basin County is said to drain off and flow either to the east or to the southwest, depending on which side of Watershed gets the rain. A geologist who did a survey claimed the actual point of divide ran right through the Tolliver house, in Summit. Rain falling on one side of their roof will roll off heading for the Atlantic Ocean. On the other side it will end up in the Gulf of Mexico. Whatever the truth of this was—geological survey or not—the Tolliver place was a house divided.

Mrs Tolliver had her stroke in 1954, and was found by Franklin in her hammock, dead. She left the house and property to the two boys, grown men by then. Having the Tolliver brothers to answer to was like having two daddies, stern or kindly whichever way the wind blew—but no kin: each one pulling on you from a different direction. They could be straw-bosses both, and keep Franklin hopping. But they were thoughtful at times, too. Lionel took pains over Franklin's studies and Trace paid to have the boy's tonsils taken out at a Coloured clinic in Chattanooga. They had ambitions for him. Trace wanted Franklin to turn out a soldier, but Lionel was determined he would go to Tuskegee Institute come hell or high water. Both brothers had sentimental natures, all told, and must have loved him, at least in the way a white will love something that is his, that he has always had, and is black.

When Franklin turned twelve Lionel saw fit to show him where his momma was buried, and took him to the very spot. It was not a mound, but a little sunken place in the lawn at the far end of the Tolliver property—for she could not be buried in the white cemetery, and there was no other. What she died of, or how she came to work for the Tollivers, Franklin never knew.

He now came on to the Tolliver place by the back way, through the boxwood hedge where one boxwood was missing, right there where his momma was buried. One reason Franklin came through the back was in case Billie Jean Ellis might be on the premises. That way, if he had to see her he would see her before she saw him.

He came in behind the house, past the little outhouse that nobody had ever got around to pulling down, and Franklin always used. He was never forbidden the toilet facilities of the main house—plumbing had been put in in 1935—and Franklin bathed in the same claw-footed tub Trace and Lionel used, but he had never used the inside commode. For a black boy who must not shout or cry or sing or laugh in front of anybody, a private place, no matter how it smelled, was a sanctuary not easily surrendered.

The main house was a twelve-room two-storey pine structure with a steep shingled roof and no special embellishment except for four square-shaped wooden pillars across the front gallery. As Franklin came around by the side of the house he was relieved to see no car parked out front, which meant Billie Jean Ellis was nowhere in sight—for she did not go ten feet without her car. Through the vines that grew up on that side of the gallery Franklin could make out the two brothers sitting there, each on his own side of the porch. Neither one noticed Franklin's approach. Lionel was lying in his momma's hammock, with a newspaper; Trace sat tilted back in a rocking chair, with a drink in his hand.

They both went on living in that same house: two brothers, as different as night and day. Trace had a belly already, but Lionel at forty-four was as slender as he had been at sixteen. Lionel still had a thick head of hair, though it was naturally going grey; while Trace was getting bald fast, and trimmed what little hair he had left in short-clipped G.I. fashion.

The Tolliver brothers did not "get along." Folks said they did not get along when

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younger, and that is probably where it started. But the house had been left to both of them, and they both decided to live there—though each on his own side of it.

"My Lord, lookit who's come," said Lionel, beckoning to Franklin from the hammock. He snapped his reading glasses off to be certain he was seeing right.

Franklin was suddenly short of breath; he climbed the porch steps as if walking on eggs. He did not take his sailor hat off. He felt better with it on, just as he had when getting off the bus downtown, but for a different reason.

"I'm pleased to see you again, Mister Lionel and Mister Trace."

Trace put his feet down on the floor, hard; his face was redder than usual. Lionel tried to smile, but looked uncertain about it. The two brothers were plainly glad to see the black sailor appear before their eyes, though they looked upon him with confusion. It was as if an unexpected wind was blowing across the gallery setting everything astir; or a high piercing note was played on a musical instrument, and stuck there.

"Grown up," said Trace foolishly. "A grown-up man."

"And in the Service. Is this a leave you're on, or what?"

"You are a sight for sore eyes."

Franklin's voice came near to failing him as he said, "I just came by to say hello."

"How much leave you got?" asked Trace.

"Nine days, before my ship sails."

"Stay here, stay here," said Lionel. Trace nodded his head yes, in agreement with his brother for once.

"Thank you kindly, but I just came by to say hello. And tell what happened. With me and Miss Ellis. And why I left and what became of Mister Trace's pistol he gave me."

BILLIE JEAN ELLIS SWORE UP and down she was going to marry Lionel Tolliver or know the reason why. That was before Trace got out of the Army and came home to stay. Billie Jean was in her twenties, and had not got a husband yet. She never would, folks used to say, if she kept on the way she was going. She had been known to check into hotels in Chattanooga by herself, but you could bet she did not stay by herself long. She came within an inch of being put out of the Baptist Church, but what saved her was being piano player for the choir.

Where she got the idea to marry Lionel Tolliver nobody could say. He was twice her age, and the tale went around about him that he had once lived with some fellow in Cincinnati, the same as man and wife. Another tale was that Lionel dressed up in his dead momma's clothes, and went to bed in her nightdress. Lionel may have been peculiar, but he was not that peculiar. Franklin had lived with the Tolliver brothers too long to believe every tale that went around about them.

The truth was that Lionel went to Cincinnati to study music at the conservatory up there. He studied piano, and later he played piano accompaniments for concert singers all over the country. But he had a rheumatic heart, and had to quit his career at thirty-eight. He still played piano two or three hours every day, rain or shine, and gave piano lessons to people around town. Lionel taught Billie Jean Ellis to play.

"He reminds me of that piano player on television with candles," said Billie Jean, referring to Lionel. "Gray hair on a man is romantic, and I want a husband that's been around."

Then Trace came home, for good.

Trace was more the rough-and-ready type. He did go to Meharry Medical in Nashville for a spell, wanted to be a doctor to start, but changed his mind and settled for dentist when he saw how long an MD took. Then he joined the Army in time for the tail end of World War II, and stayed on for Korea. He was an officer, and practiced dentistry instead of carrying a rifle. When his twenty years were up he took his Discharge and came out with a good pension. He would never have to work another day of his life, but he got restless and went back to dentistry —only with civilians now, instead of soldiers.

"You know something? I always said you would turn up again one of these days," Trace said to Franklin.

"Tell Trace he never said any such thing," said Lionel. The brothers sometimes talked in a childish way, talking through Franklin, when they did not agree.

"Whatever made you go and join an outfit like the Navy?" asked Trace, who did not

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bother to hide his disappointment that Franklin was not in an Army uniform.

"I just did," said Franklin.

Lionel made no comment one way or the other. His idea had always been to make a musician out of Franklin, and put him through Fisk or Tuskegee.

"Hell's bells, take a seat," said Trace. Lionel said, "Yes, sit down, sit down."

There was another rocking chair on the veranda, but Franklin felt easier standing up.

LIONEL WAS THE ONE who gave Franklin that harmonica, on his 14th birthday.

"It is a Hohner I bought in Cincinnati," said Lionel, "and not just some 2-octave toy."

Trace was on hand when Lionel gave it to him, and snorted in belittlement.

At Christmas, to go Lionel one better, Trace presented Franklin with a .45 pistol he had brought back from the Army.

"Now there's a little item that a man can get on in the world with," said Trace.

At first Franklin was too frightened of the thing to pick it up. This was as close as he had ever been to a weapon of any kind. He finally murmured his thanks, and took the pistol in both hands, pointed to the floor, and carried it off—trying to think where to hide it.

As he went out he heard Lionel rage: "Are you out of your mind or drunk or what? To give a fourteen-year-old Coloured boy a firearm in this county."

"That's the goddamn point. Give him confidence, that's what I gave him. Listen, when the going gets rough he'll go a lot further in this world with a pistol than a mouth organ."

"You are a drunken idiot for sure."

"And you are a piano-thumping ninny. When he gets older I'm going to get him some cartridges and show him how to shoot the thing."

"Are you out of your mind?"

"WHATEVER DID YOU do with that pistol then?" Trace was asking.

"I sold it."

Trace did not say anything for a minute. He reached down into the umbrella stand beside the rocking chair where he kept his bottle, and brought the bottle out. He poured himself another drink, and was about to put the bottle back when he thought to offer a drink to Franklin.

"No thank you, sir."

"Sold it," Trace repeated to himself. "Live and learn," he said, but he was smiling. Trace took a drink, with the smile still on his face, a trick of his.

"I sold it to Miss Ellis. She gave me twenty-five dollars for it and asked me where it was hid so she could go and get it, only I told her the wrong place."

"Miss Ellis?" said Lionel.

"Billie Jean?" repeated Trace. The brothers looked across the porch at one another, something they seldom did if they could help it.

Franklin saw it was high time to tell the whole story.

BILLIE JEAN ELLIS STARTED coming around the Tolliver place more and more. Franklin could not stand the sight of her. She claimed she was studying counterpoint and harmony with Lionel, but that was not all she was studying. Also, she was having her teeth fixed by Trace. So between the house and the jail—and sometimes at church, when Franklin worked there and Billie Jean was at choir practice—he was forever crossing her path. He reckoned she was what passed for pretty, with whites. She had an upturned little nose just barely sprinkled with freckles that people call cute. She wore sweaters and high heels like a movie star, but there were always dark patches under her eyes as if they had been blacked by somebody, or she didn't sleep nights. She almost always wore a bandanna on her head for her dishwater hair was nothing to brag about.

She acted like the new Mrs Tolliver already, and sent Franklin on fool errands or ordered him around as if he was hers to tell what to do. Half the time she sent him to fetch something she could as soon do herself, with less trouble.

Franklin had never prayed before, and was not certain how to go about it, but he prayed against Billie Jean Ellis the same as he would against the devil. He did not believe either Trace or Lionel would take it in his head to marry such trash, but Billie Jean was so devious—and white people were liable to

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such foolishness. (Look how she already had Trace wrapped around her little finger.) Franklin prayed that she would go off to Chattanooga one of these days and never come back, but his prayer was not answered; and it seemed like, even in his sleep, he could hear her saying, "Hey Franklin, come over here."

"HEY FRANKLIN, come over here." It was Billie Jean Ellis in her red Chevrolet, parked in front of the house.

It was warm for October, and Franklin was barefoot, raking leaves.

"Come over here, I said."

This was right after Franklin had seen her in Trace's office at the jail with her clothes half off. He had a mortal fear of her now, and did not know how to look her in the face. But he put his rake down, and walked slowly down the flagstone path to where she was sitting in the car.

"Get in the car," said Billie Jean.

"I got to rake up these leaves, Miss Ellis."

"Get in. Trace wants you to go to Pierpont with me and help me load up some dental stuff he ordered."

"I better first tell Mister Lionel."

"You get in this car. I just told you what Trace said, and I haven't got all day."

Franklin did not try to hide how miserable he was as he started to get in the back seat.

"Not back there, up front. Where I can talk to you."

"I better not sit in the front, ma'am."

"You better do what I tell you."

Franklin's first thought was to turn tail and run to Lionel, but she had the car door open already, and Franklin did not know how to stop himself from doing what a white person told him to.

He got in, with his stomach churning. She stepped on the gas and the car started so fast the door slammed shut of itself—almost catching Franklin's fingers in it.

They drove right through the heart of Watershed like that, Billie Jean Ellis smiling to beat the band and Franklin sitting up front with her. She even turned the radio on, which somehow made it worse.

Franklin squeezed over against the door to be away from her, pressed against the window looking dead ahead, with a frown. A lot of people saw them in spite of Billie Jean's fast driving—or maybe because of it. The barber stopped cutting somebody's hair to look, and some ladies were looking out of the drugstore window. One old man, in the centre of a bunch of tobacco chewers on the post office steps, pointed his cane at the car.

Pierpont, where they were headed, was the home of the Consolidated Copper Mines, Inc. You used to come across signs saying, "Nigger Don't Let the Sun Set on Your Head in Copper Basin County" around Pierpont, to scare blacks off, and keep them from trying for jobs at the mines.

In no time they were through Watershed and out travelling the dead region around Low Point where nothing ever grew, nor ever would. Hillsides all around were cut across by ugly gullies where the rain had washed all the topsoil away. Not a tree or a blade of grass or a speck of greenery anywhere in sight: fumes from the copper company ate away all the plant life except for a little stretch of experimental vine Consolidated was planting alongside the highway to keep the road-bed from being washed out altogether.

At the copper works it was worse. Streamers of black and yellow smoke flowed together into one big blistering cloud hanging over the land like a judgment. One main pipe burned a constant hellish smoky flame against the sky; it looked like it would be burning there till doomsday. Rusted L&N gondolas were pulled up beside the plant on the dead-end railroad tracks, a siding between slag heaps. But the gondolas stood empty: the only thing pouring out of the plant right then was a mudbank of sludge moving steadily forward, piling up a blue-grey spill on two sides of the tracks. The liquid part of it was some kind of festering sulphur-coloured slime that oozed into a ditch beside the road they were driving on. It was like some awful unholy sore had broken open in the earth and was spilling out a whole river of pus from being so poisoned inside.

The radio in the red Chevrolet was going full blast, and Franklin wanted to cover his ears and squeeze his eyes shut. He felt as scared and low-down as he had ever felt in his life, for it dawned on him that Billie Jean had just made up this errand to Pierpont. Trace had said no such thing. The way she dreamed it up was to waltz Franklin all the

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way through town, and now out here in the Copper Basin, where people would see him sitting up front with her in her car. He wondered if she was drunk—he had one time seen her drink right out of the bottle, like a man. No, she was just downright calculating, and up to some meanness. There was nothing you would put past her: she was driving Franklin into the worst trouble a black boy could have.

"What do you do with yourself nights, Franklin? I don't see any black gal around Watershed for you to sneak off and be with."

Franklin mumbled something.

"Cat got your tongue?"

"No ma'am."

She had a foolish giggle for being twenty-some years of age. Franklin could mimic that giggle on his harmonica to sound just like her. (He touched the harmonica in his pocket for luck—seeing as how prayer had failed him.)

"What'd you think when you saw me that time in my birthday suit?"

"Nothing."

"I bet. I bet you didn't think nothing. I bet you thought plenty."

Franklin tried to scrunch down lower in his seat.

"Did you ever see a shape like mine on somebody before? Did you dream about me, after you saw me like that? Say."

Franklin kept still.

She started switching radio stations because none of the songs that came on suited her.

"Listen here—you going to tell anybody what you saw?"

"No ma'am."

"I wouldn't care if you did—everybody knows me. Or they think they know. I don't give a hoot in hell what they think, except Lionel. I don't want Lionel to know."

"I wouldn't tell him. I swear."

She narrowed her eyes, thinking something over: the dark patches took a funny cast when she did that. She took out a cigarette and put it in her mouth, driving one-handed. Then she showed Franklin where the car lighter was, and had him light her cigarette for her.

"I fell in love with Lionel Tolliver when I was little, and never got over it," she said, and smoked.

The radio played *You Always Said Let's Just Be Friends*, so she switched it off.

"Anyway, I got me an idea I want to talk to you about."

BEFORE SHE COULD SAY what her idea was, they came to a little fairground, with a carnival. It was a strange sight to come across, driving that barren territory. All that gaudy out in the midst of this desolation: tents and banners and neon lights flickering in broad daylight. The ferris wheel was spinning around with nobody on it; you could hear pinball machine buzzers all the way out to the road, and country music coming out of loudspeakers.

Billie Jean pulled into the parking lot, still smoking her cigarette.

"You said we were going to Pierpont," said Franklin.

"We're going to Pierpont when I get good and ready."

It was late. The freakish red sun hung low in the smoke haze from the copper works: nothing seemed to cast an actual shadow, not even the ferris wheel, and made you think the whole carnival and everybody in it might disappear as soon as the sun went down.

"Come on. Get out of there."

Franklin made no move to leave the car.

Billie Jean smiled her wide smile again, and her eyes were bright: "I will just have to call on one of these old boys over here to find out what's ailing you."

When he finally got out his legs felt too weak to walk on. There were mine workers and country people all around: pinch-lip wives and frail grandmas and heavyset mountain boys in overalls with their shirt-sleeves rolled up. The ladies looked coolly at Billie Jean's high heels, and cigarette—the menfolk looked her over too, but then they shifted their eyes to Franklin.

Billie Jean spotted a shooting gallery next to the merry-go-round, and said, "Hey Franklin, come over here."

Franklin was afraid to stay too far from her and afraid to stay too close. Everybody on the place was white, of course. She finally took hold of his arm and pulled him over to the shooting gallery. The shooting gallery man had an arrow through his head—it was a trick, to attract attention—and tried to talk Billie Jean into shooting at balloons. You

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could win a French doll or a glass ashtray or a big 3-D plexiglass picture of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane.

"Not me, sport," said Billie Jean. "Let this boy here take a try." She meant Franklin. "He owns his own gun back home, and is a first-class shot."

Franklin's mouth fell open, and stayed that way. Where did she ever find that out? How did she know about the pistol Trace gave him? Trace must've told her himself, bragging —it was like him.

"I don't know, Miss," said the shooting gallery man. He talked out of the side of his mouth. He did not know about handing over a rifle to a Coloured boy, even a shooting gallery rifle. "Why don't you try, yourself. Only 25 cents, five shots."

But Billie Jean had picked up one of the rifles and held it out to Franklin, as far as the chain would go.

People were starting to gather around. When Billie Jean said, "Show these folks what a good shot you are," a bunch of white-headed kids heard her, and spilled off the merry-go-round before it could even come to a stop, then stood around watching to see if a black boy was really going to shoot a rifle.

A hillbilly lament was coming out of the merry-go-round loudspeaker, but all of a sudden it faded out and the merry-go-round came to a dead stop. Out of the corner of his eye Franklin saw a man step down off the merry-go-round platform: he was wearing a Gene Autry cowboy shirt and was the living image of Laudermilk, only he had legs. His arms were big like Laudermilk's, and he came up and stood nearby with his big arms crossed across his chest, waiting.

The shooting gallery man did not want any trouble, and kept saying, "I don't know, Miss," to Billie Jean. The arrow through his head would swing one way and then another as he watched how the crowd was building up. "Tell you what," he said, with a worried smile, "How about you yourself taking a few pot shots, on the house, no charge."

Then the merry-go-round man spoke up: "That nigger work for you, little lady?"

"What's it to you?" Billie Jean snapped back. She would sass the devil himself if she met up with him.

The merry-go-round man did not even uncross his arms. He just switched the chew of tobacco in his mouth from one side to the other, and said, "That boy ain't going to shoot no rifles around here. Now I am giving you five minutes to get your nigger out of this here carnival before we take and string him up from a telephone pole."

Franklin's legs just about buckled: he could have keeled over, then and there.

What was only murmured before now grew loud as thunder: the crowd backed the merry-go-round man up.

It was lucky then that Billie Jean had sense enough to know she had gone too far. She stamped her cigarette out under a spike heel, mad, and stalked off through a place in the crowd—Franklin stumbling after her. Nobody laid a hand on him, or tried to. He got to the car safe and sound.

He thought the automobile never would get started, and kept touching his harmonica next to his heart over and over till the car motor and the carnival music started up at the same time.

"JUST THE KIND of dangerous damnfool stunt that female would pull," said Lionel, aroused, sitting up straight as a poker. His newspaper had come apart all over the hammock.

Trace just sat looking sheepish.

"She drove me right on to Pierpont after that," said Franklin. "On the way over she said, 'Well, you see the fix you are in. I reckon you better hightail it out of this county, if you know what is good for you.' I think I started to cry. She had got me so mixed up I didn't know where I was at. But I sure enough knew I had to go off. She said, 'I tell you what, I'll buy that pistol off of you.' She was smiling when she said it. 'I never got no place playing piano,' she said, 'maybe a pistol is what I need.' Then she laughed and said, 'I'll give you twenty-five dollars for it, which will buy you a bus ticket to a place where there's more niggers than you can shake a stick at, where you'll feel right at home.' As soon as we got to Pierpont she drove me straight to the bus station. She asked me where the pistol was hid and I said upstairs under my straw tick where I slept. Then she counted out twenty-five dollars in fives in my hand, and bought me a bus ticket to Washington, D.C."

Trace went on looking sheepish, but

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Lionel was as mad as if it happened yesterday: "You mean she sent you off to Washington without any shoes on your feet?" What he could not get over was that Franklin went on the bus barefoot.

"A lady at Traveller's Aid in Washington got me a pair when I got there, and a room at the YMCA."

"You sure you don't want a drink?" asked Trace, who was having another himself. He had his bottle all the way out of the umbrella stand, and kept it wedged between his knees, handy.

"No sir, thank you kindly."

"He thinks everything in life is smoothed over with a drink of whiskey. Whiskey and guns."

Trace merely sipped his whiskey, looking out through the vines into nowhere.

"You hear me?" Lionel directed himself to his brother. "You like to got this boy killed."

"Keep it up, keep it up," said Trace, tilted back.

Lionel glared at him, then lapsed into silence. Trace began rocking slowly in the rocking chair; Lionel was putting the paper back together.

"For unadulterated evil, that woman takes the cake."

"She was a wild one, all right," said Trace.

There was another silence while Franklin wondered what had become of her.

Then Trace spoke up and said, "Well, anyway, she took off,"—without Franklin's asking.

"I hope she's in hell," said Lionel.

"Wherever she is, she's making hell for somebody. She finally took up with a married man, a piano-tuner from Low Point—and the last anybody heard, the two of them run off to Florida with every penny the man could lay his hands on."

"The wife is now on Welfare," said Lionel, "and two children."

"She really was a wild one," said Trace, as if the world was full of Billie Jean Ellises, so what you had to do was watch your step. "I wonder if she has shot her piano-tuner yet, with that pistol you sold her."

"No sir, not with that pistol. I told her it was under my straw tick—but it never was."

They waited for Franklin to say where he kept it.

"You know, Mister Trace, I was scared of that thing from the start. I never wanted to touch it. A long time ago, not long after you gave it to me, I threw that pistol down the hole out in the privy where I used to go. Nobody shoot anybody with that pistol."

Lionel was the first to smile, a look of pure satisfaction on his face. Then Trace began to chuckle low to himself—Franklin's tale beginning to sink in, thinking how things turn out—but after that he got to laughing so hard Franklin feared he would tilt too far in his rocking chair and fall out. His face got all red from laughing and he spilled whiskey on his pants. Pretty soon he worked up a coughing spell. Lionel looked disgusted with him, and made no move to help him, but Franklin went over and slapped him on the back the way he used to do, to get him his breath back before he strangled. He took the bottle from between Trace's legs and put it back in the umbrella stand where it wouldn't get broken.

There was no more talk of Franklin staying at the Tolliver place with them for any time. The brothers knew, as well as Franklin, the long watch was up. Whatever else Billie Jean Ellis had done, she had set Franklin apart from Watershed for all time. He had only come back, as he said, to say hello.

Trace tried to get up out of his rocking chair when he shook Franklin's hand goodbye, but he was too drunk or too weak. There was some kind of pain in Lionel's eyes when he shook hands with Franklin, but he was dignified about it. That was how Franklin left them, each on his own side of the veranda; and as he walked down the flagstone walk he could not help but notice how poorly the lawn was kept.

At the bus station Franklin sat on a divan made out of a car seat and practised how to make a harmonica sound like a white man's laugh.

LITTLEJOHN IS TAPPING the harmonica against his hip, to clear the instrument of spit. The song he has finished is not what was expected. There is a little time of silence, with the music missing.

"What the hell song was that?" asks Bailey.

"Little piece of country music."

"Say what you like," says the helmsman, "but Littlejohn sure knows how to play a mouth-organ."

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"Is that what's called semi-classical?" asks the relief helmsman, and the helmsman says, "No, semi-classical is like *White Christmas.* What Littlejohn played is more on the order of what they call folk music."

Then Bailey asks, "How do the words go?"

"That song is a song I wrote myself. I never wrote the words to it."

"Interesting," says Mister Walker. "But I always thought you people specialised in the blues." Mister Walker has never known exactly what the blues are.

"Not always," says Littlejohn, "Sir."

It is 0325 hours, and the midwatch is almost up. It is high time for Littlejohn to go around the ship waking up the four-to-eight relief. He tucks the harmonica into the jumper pocket of his whites, and is about to go below when the helmsman says, "What the hell, take the wheel for a little while. Get some steering practice. I'll wake the relief for you."

"Good idea," says Bailey, who is Littlejohn's division P.O. and has been thinking of letting Littlejohn stand a wheel watch one of these days.

"Permission granted," says Mister Walker, whose permission has not been requested.

Bailey is obliged to complete the ship's log before the watch is over, so it falls to the relief helmsman—still wearing Littlejohn's earphones—to stand at Littlejohn's shoulder and instruct him as to the function of the steering gear. Mister Walker tells Littlejohn what course they are on, then walks out on to the flying bridge to scan the horizon with his binoculars in case the lookout might have missed a last-minute light. Littlejohn's hand trembles on the polished spoke of the ship's great wheel, and the relief helmsman says, "Don't worry, everybody is nervous at first."

Littlejohn's dark face, illuminated from below by the shaded light from the gyro-compass, is set in concentration as he takes in the words of the relief helmsman. At the same time he is trying to forget several ghostly faces that continue to bedevil him, and shake the echo of music from another place still lingering in the wheelhouse. The relief helmsman puts one hand on the wheel with Littlejohn's: one full swing to the right, then a half turn back to correct the swing. Littlejohn can feel the ship's vibration through the soles of his feet as the *Halstead* responds to the steering manoeuvre.

You may wonder what has become of a woman who once led a black boy to the edge of the valley of the shadow and might well have watched him put to death: does her foot wither the very earth she treads upon? Or consider—as sailors do, during the long watch, when sea stories have run out—the predatory fish that feed in the deepest parts below the hull of this vessel: these creatures are said to be sightless, for the water at that depth is forever dark. This very stream might well be the mingling of sickly poisons that have drained off from a copper-dusted land, as well as the sweet rain-water of a distant country town. Picture two brothers condemned to sit a lifetime at separate ends of a front porch to contemplate the why and wherefore of rain falling on one side of their roof or the other.

In a little while the relief helmsman takes his hand from the wheel and stands away. The black sailor is alone, steering the *USS Halstead* through the deep waters of a southern sea.

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Amos Elon & Sana Hassan

Arab & Jew

A Dialogue between Enemies

"... the discovery of the reconciling formula is always left to future generations in which passions have cooled into curiosity and agonies of peoples have become the exercise in the schools. The devil who builds bridges does not span such chasms till much that is precious to mankind has vanished down them for ever."

R. H. TAWNEY

ELON: Isn't it amazing, Sana, that after twenty-five years of bloodshed and terror, we find ourselves—an Arab and an Israeli—engaged in a public dialogue? Even now we live in what still seems only a temporary lull in the hostilities. Here we are, and yet, isn't it odd that we have to converse in English? That neither of us speaks the other's language is really a shame, and sad. Why have such dialogues been impossible so far?

Hassan: I think it was a terrible and tragic mistake on the part of us Arabs not to talk to you Israelis before. We need such dialogues. Without them, any peace settlement will be just a piece of paper. We have to break through the prejudices and stereotypes which keep us apart, and peel away at the layers of accumulated hatred which are between us. I think that we Arabs never agreed to talk to you before because we felt it would be granting Israel a kind of moral legitimacy. This we were unprepared to do.

Elon: And are you now?

AMOS ELON, *a leading young Israeli journalist, is the author of "The Israelis: Fathers and Sons" (1971).* SANA HASSAN *is an Arab student leader and the daughter of a former Egyptian Ambassador to the United States. "Between Enemies", their book-length conversations, is published by André Deutsch (London) and Random House (New York).*

Hassan: Even now, probably, most Arabs would be unprepared to talk. They still think of peace more in negative terms, as a cessation of hostility rather than as a positive thing, as interaction, as sharing. They do not see that the establishment of diplomatic relations, cultural exchanges, tourism, commerce, and so forth, are bound to follow. But this will inevitably come. This takes time and we all have to be patient. We must first of all start with a formal peace in order to be able to reach a real peace later on.

Elon: But how?

Hassan: Above all, we must talk to each other. Our hostility has been autistic. We have not even reached the most basic level of human communication. We haven't even found a way to explain to each other our aggravation, our rage. If we'd only achieved that much communication, then there would be some ground for hope rather than despair.

It's incredible that our countries know absolutely nothing about each other. There have been people before that fought protracted wars, like the Germans and the French, for example, but at least they spoke to each other, they travelled in each other's countries, they read each other's literature. We live in total ignorance of each other. We are trapped in clichés and stereotypes. When we see Israelis in the street, it is almost like watching creatures from Mars. We are almost surprised that they have eyes or noses or feet. We

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find their living reality extraordinary. Although we know that Israel exists, we know it only in an abstract sense.

Elon: As you know, Sana, most peoples are ignorant of each other. That's not so unusual even among people who live in peace. I don't know how many stereotyped notions Americans and Mexicans have of each other, Americans of Russians, Frenchmen of Germans, but I suspect that there are many. Schopenhauer said that every nation derides the other and that all are right . . . that sardonic attitude may be a good antidote to nationalism; but in our case we have gone too far. The extraordinary, even unique feature of our conflict, a feature which makes one almost despair, is that there's a total lack of contact not only between the peoples, but what's worse, between our governments as well. Our leaders have never met, our diplomats have never talked, they've never had the opportunity to get to know one another, to become familiar with the fears, the hopes, the passions that make them tick as political leaders and as human beings. This has never happened elsewhere and perhaps this is why our conflict seems so different, so tragic and so difficult to resolve. Even as individuals, we never seem to get together, except as potential killers or victims.

Hassan: Well, I'm glad we met.

ELON: I can't begin to tell you how glad I am. Even that, Sana, was an accident which could easily not have happened at all. I arrived in America early in March to give a series of lectures on behalf of the United Jewish Appeal's Israel Emergency Fund. I am too old to serve in an Israeli army combat unit, and when the last war was over, I felt that next to driving a truck or an ambulance, the best I could do for Israel was to help raise funds, and to help get Israel's case across to American college audiences. On the second day here, quite by accident, I saw an article you had written a few weeks earlier in the *New York Times Magazine*. I was astounded by this article, in which you pleaded not only for peace but also said that Israel's moral case was as good as the moral case of the Arab. You recognised Israel's historic rights. As far as I know, no Arab had ever made such an admission before, at least not in public. I mentioned your article as a hopeful sign in a lecture I gave in Harvard Hall. I didn't know at the time that you were in the audience.

Hassan: I went to that lecture because I was curious to see you. I do graduate work at Harvard University in political science, but I travel back and forth to Egypt all the time. My speciality is Middle Eastern politics and I guess my interest in this subject derives also from the fact that my father is a former Egyptian ambassador and Cabinet minister, and that I'm married to a high Egyptian government official. I read your book *The Israelis: Founders and Sons* three years ago and I was astounded by it as you were by my article. It was one of the very few books which helped me discover the other face of Israel which we Arabs never see—the more humane and decent face. The usual way we get to see you is in uniform, and that's hardly conducive to helping us understand you.

With your book, I felt that you, more than any Israeli I've ever encountered, had an extraordinary ability to understand our fears and anxieties and to recognise our rights without compromising your own. You showed an empathy that really moved me, all the more so because your love for Israel, which came through very strongly throughout the book, was not self-righteous and sanctimonious but understanding and critical. This for me was almost infectious. For the first time in my life it made me feel capable of putting myself in the skin of an Israeli because I believe, as your book implied, that real love is the ability to accept the bad along with the good and to recognise it, to be able to weep for one's country as well as to applaud it.

And so, as I was sitting in the Harvard audience, I decided I had to get together with you and talk to you.

Elon: I can't tell you how excited I am that this opportunity to talk came about. But let me make a suggestion. In this dialogue let us aim at more than just a discussion. Let's not try to score points. Rather, let us try to meet as two human beings equally enmeshed in an enormous tragedy and equally aware of it—if you like, in a mutual exercise of self-awareness.

Hassan: Yes, that is what I too would like, it's what we *need* to do.

Hassan: You're not the first Israeli I've ever met, but somehow I have never had this kind of human rapport with an Israeli before. I wonder why? You personalise the conflict for me. All of a sudden it is no longer only politics, or armies against armies. I have always cared about casualties, not only on our side but on your side too. They matter to me, but for the first time, your casualties are more than just abstract statistics.

Elon: You are the first Egyptian I've really ever spoken to. Meeting them in uniform, as I've done too often in the army in the past, is not the same thing. When I lived in Washington for a couple of years in the 1960s, I made vain attempts to meet Egyptians privately. Once at a party I was introduced to the Egyptian press attaché. When

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he heard who I was, he refused to shake hands, turned his back on me and walked away.

Hassan: That's the problem. We Arabs have never given ourselves the chance to meet you outside of our stereotypes and our prejudices. My father was Egyptian ambassador to the United States in the forties, and it so happened that he was our delegate to the UN General Assembly which decided on 29 November 1947, to establish the state of Israel. Of course, he fought this decision vehemently. His opposite on the Israeli side was your Foreign Minister, Abba Eban. My father later told me that Eban had sent him a message after one of the meetings telling him that he would very much like to meet him privately. My father refused, and here I am, his daughter, one generation later, meeting you and talking to you just down the street from the UN headquarters on the East River, where Arabs and Israelis are still fighting publicly and never meeting privately. I suspect my father, twenty-seven years ago, intensely disliked what he had to do for political propriety's sake. He is retired now and is probably pleased that we are talking.

Elon: And yet, all Israelis cannot meet all Egyptians. So how can we break these mental stereotypes, Sana? I feel that both sides, you and I, you and we, are still fighting ghosts of the past. The Arabs contend with the phantoms of British and French imperialism, we with horrendous shadows of our ghastly past. Behind every Arab soldier, we see an S.S. man.

HASSAN: I'm glad to say that quite a few Egyptians are themselves aware that they respond to stereotypes. When I was in Egypt last year, this joke was circulating: An Egyptian fellah returns to his village from the 1967 war. He boasts that he has just fought off a French invasion. His fellow peasants sneer at him.

"What French invasion, you idiot? This is not the 1956 war. In this war there were only Israelis."

"No, no." he protests, "I tell you, I was fighting the French."

"How could you tell that they were French?"

"Because they were tall, blond and decent, and the Israelis are short, dark, hunchbacked, with hooked noses, and they're horrible."

Elon: There are similar stereotypes on our side. In Israel we often go from one extreme to another. If we don't view you as monstrous Nazi devils, we tend to look at you as subhuman or irrelevant. The Hebrew colloquialism for a shoddy, sloppy job is *avoda aravit*—"Arab work." When you want to tell a man, "Don't be a fool." or "Don't be devious," you tell him, "*Al tehiye aravi*"—"Don't be an Arab."

Hassan: Isn't this because you are still governed by the same aged European establishment which has all the prejudices Europeans had in the first part of the 20th century when they were still the colonial overlords of Africa and Asia?

Elon: No. On a popular level, the resentment of the Arab is not predominant among European Jews, but mostly among Jews who fled to Israel from the Arab countries. Among the latter this feeling sometimes borders upon real hatred. This might seem a paradox, but that's how it is. Moreover, the East European establishment of which you speak was really *sui generis*. It never reflected the social prejudices of 19th-century or early 20th-century Europe. It revolted against them. It was a child of European humanism, not colonialism. It postulated freedom and justice, not prejudice, social or ethnic. The Zionists were motivated by two basic factors: one was memory, the memory of a lost homeland to be regained for a dispersed people, persecuted and downtrodden, and still without a territory of its own. The other was a desire to establish a just society, for Jews and for those Arabs who would live among them.

It is so important, Sana, to remember this background, for it has been your tragedy and ours that the original Zionist dream became so enmeshed in war that it was never fully realised. The original Zionist dream never envisaged the establishment of merely another ordinary nation-state. On the contrary, it was widely felt at the time—and to an extent, it's still felt now—that if the Jews are to take this unusual step, gathering in their exiles, if we make this marvellous leap against time, against precedent, even against so-called sane argument (Chaim Weizmann said, "You don't have to be crazy to be a Zionist, but it helps")—if we take this unusual step, it will have to be for something considerably better than just another nation-state. Theodor Herzl, the father of modern Zionism, envisaged an open society—as he put it, "a *Genossenschaft*," a free common wealth. Weizmann said time and again, "Let's not create another Lithuania, or Rumania, or Poland. There are enough of those already." David Ben-Gurion went even further when he claimed that Israel must be "*ner lagoyim*," a light to the nations of the earth, "a model for the redemption of the entire human race." This was the ethos of that East European establishment of which you speak.

Hassan: What you say really moves me, Amos. It is a very beautiful dream, but what has become of it? Please do not misunderstand me. I do not wish to sound cynical. Quite the contrary, it is precisely because I too believe in the dream that my

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disappointment is so great. I ceased to think of Israelis as devils when I first read about men like Chaim Weizmann or Martin Buber or Yehuda Magnes. Long before I had the opportunity to meet Israelis in flesh and blood, I was impressed by their Utopian expectations.

You cannot imagine the impact upon me of most Israelis I've met so far. It was often quite shattering. To be sure, Israelis did not turn out to be the ruthless villains depicted to me in my early childhood in Egypt, but neither were they the noble creatures whom you have just described. The trouble is that they were frequently, I'm sorry to say, parochial, smug, petty, self-centred and arrogant. They hardly took the trouble to disguise their contempt for Arabs. Once, when I was in Paris, I overheard a conversation between an Israeli officer and an elderly French lady in the bus travelling from Le Bourget Airport to the Place des Invalides. He was telling her of the burning of the Al Aksa Mosque in Jerusalem, which had just taken place. He told her that he was sure an Arab had done it just to cause trouble for Israel.[1]

I could not resist the temptation, even though I did not know him. I turned around and said in French, "You must really hate the Arabs."

He answered, not knowing that I was an Egyptian, "No, I have no feelings for them, one way or the other. I neither love them nor hate them. They are animals, they behave like animals, they live like animals, they think like animals."

Perhaps this officer was not typical. Perhaps he was not too sophisticated. But most of my experiences with Israelis at Harvard, who I presume are the intellectual élite of your country, have differed only in degree, not in kind. They usually display either contempt for the Arab or utter ignorance. Once, in a course I was taking on nationalism, I said that one of the problems of economic development in Egypt was that we overproduced engineers whom we have to export to other Arab countries because we cannot find jobs for them. An Israeli student sneeringly replied, "What? You mean Egypt has engineers?"

Another time, an Israeli whom I met for the first time in a class on political theory asked me what university I had attended in Egypt. When I told him, he looked at me with utter surprise and said, "I did not know that you had any universities in Egypt other than Al Azhar University." I find it peculiar that an educated Israeli is so ignorant. Al Azhar is a religious university, a relic from the 19th century. Nowadays most Egyptian students attend other secular universities. There are five of them, with over two hundred and forty thousand students, while in Al Azhar there are only a few hundred students.

Elon: I wish you would go to Israel first and see for yourself before you make up your mind through chance encounters on a bus or the insensitive banter of some student. The guy you speak of may be a Harvard Ph.D. candidate, but that doesn't make him representative of the Israeli intellectual élite any more than the Harvard professor who a few years ago advocated bombing out all Vietnamese villages is representative of the American intellectual élite.

At the same time, when I spoke just now of the original dream of the early East European Zionists I didn't mean to draw too rosy a picture of the present. We have our share of bigots and zealots. We are not at all another Eden or the kingdom of saints purged of all sin that the early Zionists had envisaged. We are a country like many others but we live under the dreadful stresses of an unending war and with the memory of the Holocaust still fresh in our minds. It is not what Herzl or Weizmann or Martin Buber or Magnes had envisaged in their youth.

Israel is a good example illustrating that no revolution can ever be programmed. And no wonder! What was planned as an orderly exodus became a desperate escape from the gas chambers of Europe. What was planned as a model society developed as a fortress state, threatened continuously by ferocious enemies. What was planned as a safe haven became entrapped in near-permanent war. The early Zionists were humanists, liberals, pacifists and social democrats with an instinctive abhorrence of all prejudice and all violence. They were proven wrong in the end. It was their fault, but not only theirs. In the 1930s their humanism made them reach out to the Arabs time and again in futile attempts to arrive at a compromise: by proposing a binational state or partition. The tragic truth is that they never found an Arab who was ready to speak to them. They ended by speaking mostly to themselves.

HASSAN: But subsequently things changed in Israel, didn't they?

Elon: Yes, they did. The early innocence of the humanist Zionists survived decades of Arab intransigence. I suspect that innocence came to an end with the rise of Nazism and the collapse of civilisation in Europe. The ideal of building a model society was overshadowed now by the exigencies of rescue: save as many Jews as you possibly can from the sinking ships of Europe. The Zionist leaders had only limited means at their disposal. In the late 1930s there was not yet an Israeli state. The frustration of fighting Arab

[1] The arsonist was, in fact, a demented Australian tourist who claimed in court, later on, that he had been acting under instructions from Jesus Christ.

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opposition and British immigration restrictions to Palestine has left a deep imprint. A new nationalism emerged, less lofty, more self-centred.

It's important to remember that very few Jews, relatively speaking, were rescued through immigration to Palestine before 1939, and after 1939 the gates were shut. Between 1940 and 1945 the Jews of Europe were led like sheep to the slaughter. I wish I could make it really clear to you, Sana. I speak here of what are probably the two most important features of the Israeli national character: one is the trauma generated within Israel by the Nazi Holocaust; the other is an existentialist sense of self-assertion in adversity. Consider this background, and now place yourself in an Israeli's shoes. At the moment when some Arab leader is threatening us with extinction, whether as a people or even as a political entity, can you imagine the impact it has, the associations it immediately evokes, the fears it generates and our determination to resist?

Hassan: I understand how the Israelis feel and I do sympathise. I am sure that if I were in your shoes, I would be full of those same fears and anxieties. But try also to understand the Arabs. They are not Nazis and there are no gas chambers waiting for you in Cairo even if we do win. To us, your tendency to project from past experience seems like paranoia. I personally know that it is not. But I do wish, although this is perhaps too much to ask of you, that despite the traumas you have experienced, you would try to break free from your fixation with the past.

ELON: Look, Sana, you can be a paranoic utterly fixated on the past, and still have a lot of real and dangerous enemies. If many of us equate your enmity with anti-Semitic pogroms, this is a stereotype which is all too often reinforced by Arab propaganda. Some Arab publicists have hailed Adolf Eichmann as a "hero who fell in the Holy War."

In the past twenty years a vast literature of downright racism calling for genocide has been published in Egypt and Lebanon, often by government-owned publishing houses. You probably know that this racism has penetrated even school textbooks for Arab children. When the Israeli army entered the Gaza Strip in 1967, they found dozens of such textbooks issued by the Egyptian Ministry of Education. In tone and content, even in their graphic illustration, these textbooks resembled the worst Nazi propaganda during World War II. Or take, for example, the published records of an Egyptian government-sponsored conference of Islamic scholars from all over the Arab world. It took place in 1968 in Cairo and was formally welcomed by the Vice-President of Egypt.

Seventy Muslim priests discussed the theological significance of the Arab-Israeli war. I'm not citing Israeli propaganda to you now, Sana. They published a full transcript themselves in three fat volumes. It is a shocking document and it is the kind of thing that causes Israelis to associate you with the worst of the Nazis. The recurring themes of that conference, and I quote from the transcript, were: (1) Jews are the "enemies of God." (2) Jews are the "dogs of humanity," not only now but even in Biblical times. Their evil has been transmitted through history to this day and Israel is simply the culmination of these historically and culturally deprived people. (3) The superiority of Islam and Arabism will be demonstrated in a future military victory upon the Jews in which they shall all perish.

The fact that these Muslim priests knew the moral depravity which similar slogans of hatred had generated in Nazi Germany did not inhibit them from repeating these ideas in the most virulent form. Nor did it stop the Egyptian government from sponsoring that conference.

And there's much more to it. The infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*[9] have been published and republished under the auspices of the Egyptian government in Cairo at the expense of your taxpayers. Not since the Nazis has that calumny been republished except in Cairo and in other Arab capitals. Nasser himself once recommended the book to an Indian visitor as an "important insight" into the Jewish character. He told that Indian visitor, and I quote from the official collection of President Nasser's speeches and press interviews,

> "It is important that you read these *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. I will give you a copy. It proves beyond all doubt that three hundred Zionists, each knowing the others, control the fate of the entire European continent and elect their successors from among themselves."

What would you say to this?

Hassan: I know it may be too much to ask of you, Amos, since you are only one generation removed from Auschwitz, to look at this anti-Semitic filth with cold reason and detachment. I guess if I were in your place, I too would see a logical continuum between this anti-Semitic venom and the gas chambers. I think no matter what injustice the Israelis may have committed toward the Palestinians, it does not exonerate us from such acts. They are despicable and they will remain so, as blemishes on our

[9] The *Protocols* (concocted by a defrocked Russian priest early in this century) purport to be the transcript of an international conference of Jewish financiers, said to control the entire world and to plot the destruction of civilisation.

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record, to haunt us for generations to come. But I beg of you, for the sake of peace, make an effort to understand this.

Elon: I'd like to, but how can I understand it, except literally? Especially since it's accompanied so often by harrowing threats of physical and political annihilation.

Hassan: Well, try to understand that anti-Semitism is not rooted either in our history or in our religion or in our popular myths as it was in Europe. Arab history was relatively free from Jewish persecution before the 20th century. Though there were some exceptions, they were rare. On the whole, our relationship with Jews was characterised by tolerance and protectiveness. Far from proclaiming the falseness of Judaism, our religion, unlike Christianity, actually confirms Judaism. Mohammed viewed himself as the last of a long chain of Jewish prophets. We say in our prayers, "May God bless our prophet, Abraham, and our prophet, Moses." There is no intrinsic conflict between our religion and yours, as there is between Christian doctrine, which maintains that the Saviour has come in the form of Jesus Christ, and Jewish doctrine, which denies this.

To be sure, when Mohammed was spurned by the Jews, he had some nasty things to say about them in the Koran, but even then, his quarrel with them was over their behaviour, not over your creed. The message he left us contains many positive references to the Jews. Today anti-Semitism is only a kind of war racism in the Arab world. It's the kind that Allied propaganda generated about the Germans in World War II, and the Americans about the Japanese, to mobilise popular emotion at home. It is intense and vicious. I don't deny that, but it's not endemic and it will burn out once the conflict is over. Arab governments did not exploit anti-Semitic sentiment, as in Germany. Rather, they had to manufacture it by importing anti-Semitic literature from abroad.

Elon: Even if it is not endemic, won't it leave a mark? You go on drumming racist hatred into the minds of school-children and you will see the results somewhere. As long as you continue to believe in absurdities, you remain capable of committing atrocities. Even the racism of the Europeans is of quite recent origin. Religious persecution dates back to the Middle Ages, but the racism that fed the Nazis only started in Europe in the second half of the 19th century.

HASSAN: Yes, if this conflict continues to fester, this racism could become endemic. This is all the more reason why we must end this conflict now. Even so, you must not project from the mere existence of anti-Semitic literature to the existence of anti-Semitic feelings. I do not doubt that such feelings exist among some marginal, mostly religious groups in the Arab world, but you cannot generalise from this to the vast majority of the Arabs. Years of being subjected to propaganda in the government-controlled press and on television and radio have made them relatively immune to all kinds of propaganda. They are bored stiff with all propaganda whether it be about socialism or five-year plans, about Israel or against Jews. I tell you, the Arab people just don't believe it.

ELON: I very much hope you are correct. And yet, even if it is only "war racism", as you say, even if it is not endemic, it still goes on and on, and we, in Israel, go on hearing it all the time. Picture us, please, listening to this propaganda against the background of historical traumas, the morbid melancholy and the vast sadness which still permeate so much of Israel life. This combination explains a lot about us. It explains that prevailing sense of loneliness in the world which so many Israelis share, a sense of being utterly alone in a world which permitted the disaster to happen once, and may well permit it to happen again. It explains our obsessive suspicions, why we cling to everything we have. The average Israeli is convinced that the Jews of Europe were singled out to be massacred because they alone did not have the physical means to organise their defence. It explains our constant preoccupation with defence, our towering urge for self-reliance and for security in all possible forms, in borders, in psychological reassurance, in tangible—not implied—military arrangements. It explains why words and indirect promises are not enough, why we insist on borders more secure than those that have tempted aggression before. It explains also the rather Utopian notion of peace which the Israeli government has often had in the past. We yearn for a total peace, almost melodramatic reconciliation—Sadat and Golda falling into each other's arms. Everything short of that ideal peace is too risky, too dangerous. To be reliable, peace must be perfect.

Hassan: I understand your concern with security. It is legitimate, but I also believe that you should not make a fetish out of security and magnify your security needs beyond all realistic proportions. It paralyses you and makes you forgo peace initiatives and thereby miss out on all opportunities for peace. It seems to me a real lack of imagination that in the years since 1967 you saw no alternative but to dig in, in Suez and Golan, and wait for us to agree to peace negotiations without any preconditions. Even if you found

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Sadat's peace soundings unconvincing, I am amazed that you never called his bluff. And I find it even more surprising that you still talk to me about secure borders.

Elon: I speak of borders more secure than those we had before 1967, when Tel Aviv was within range of Arab artillery, a mere fifteen miles away.

Hassan: The Russians are now supplying a sophisticated missile system to the Arabs. These missiles may well reach Tel Aviv in the next war, making your insistence on "secure borders" obsolete. I don't understand why you insist on the antiquated notion of "secure borders." You fared better in 1967, with far more precarious frontiers, than you did in 1973, with your so-called secure border. Geography is only one factor in guaranteeing security, along with many others such as the strength of political institutions, technology, economic resources, the alertness of your intelligence services, the quality of your armed forces and your international alliances—in the long run they are more important.

In any case, wouldn't demilitarised buffer zones patrolled by UN troops serve just as well to secure your borders? After all, the Bar Lev line, which was manned by your own soldiers, along the Suez Canal, did not afford you any more protection than such troops would have done. Even Dayan has admitted that your reserve army is not large enough to sit eyeball-to-eyeball facing professional Arab armies to repel a massive first strike. Couldn't you make a mutual defence pact with the United States? Such a pact would deter any attack, just as the countries within NATO have been immune to attack because the degree of the American commitment to come to their defence is spelled out.

Elon: We have never been offered such a defence treaty by the United States. It would certainly change things if we were. On principle, I would prefer us all to get out from under the tutelage of the superpowers; if this is impossible, Israel's security would undoubtedly increase if the United States guaranteed the invulnerability of our borders.

Conversely, your perennial fears of Israeli expansionism might be assuaged by a Soviet guarantee of your borders. The important thing is to mutually agree on your borders and on ours. There is, of course, a lot of truth in what you say about the insufficiency of borders. Real security grows from many factors, including where one nation ends and another begins. If the Arabs were less divided between militants and moderates, if there was more stability in the Arab countries, and if they would be more explicit in their desire to make real peace with us, the border issue would not loom so large. In that case, even Israeli "hawks" would not be so insistent.

Hassan: But if you were the Israeli Prime Minister, Amos, would you be prepared to broadcast to the Arab world a commitment to withdraw your troops from all areas except those absolutely essential for your security? Would you do so, excepting Jerusalem, where some accommodation will have to be made? That would encourage us and foster trust among us. And would you pledge to make a token withdrawal unilaterally, to initiate the mutual process of give-and-take for the sake of peace?

Elon: In 1967 I think I certainly would have committed us to token withdrawal to prove our good intent, and I also would have favoured total withdrawal in return for a peace treaty. But now? After all that has happened since 1967? When there's still no offer of a US defence treaty? When the Arabs are still so cagey about peace? My first emotional reaction now would frankly be this: "God, am I glad I'm not Prime Minister!"

I shudder at the thought that the decision to withdraw might endanger more lives and even the existence of Israel as a state. One should be prepared to take risks for peace as one takes risks for war, but I would also like Israel to have borders slightly more secure than it had in 1967. It's an emotional gut reaction that I have, I admit.

Hassan: And I must admit that I am disappointed.

Elon: Well, what would you do if you were the President of Egypt?

HASSAN: As President of Egypt I would not have turned a deaf ear to your peace soundings, as Nasser did in 1967. I would have responded eagerly to General Dayan's appeal that we telephone Tel Aviv. If I were President, I would have called him. I would admit that our politics in the past were the result of misreadings of Israeli intention, just as yours stemmed, to some extent, from a misreading of our intentions. Both sides had made mistakes. Our fault was that we refused direct negotiations with Israel because we played up your worst fears through an extremist press and anti-Semitic literature. I would try to break through this distrust by inviting Israelis to come to Egypt, by sending Egyptians to Israel, by trying to get Israelis to write in our press and explain to us their point of view, by trying to write in your press and explain to you our point of view, by opening up telephone communications, mail, all kinds of communications, to allay your fears and build up your trust.

Elon: If you were President and said and did all that, I would gladly have made the announcement you just asked for. You would no more have any reason to be disappointed. I really wish you

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would run for the Egyptian presidency, and win it . . . .

But seriously, I would like to add something here, Sana. From what I said before of Israel living under the impact of a traumatic past, you might get the impression of a people of three million neurotics, completely entrapped in obsessive fears to the exclusion of everything else. That would be misleading. While we are definitely a traumatised people, there has, at the same time, been a generational change. And the great influx of immigrants from the Arab countries, who did not experience Nazism personally or even indirectly through their relatives, is changing the temper and tone of the country.

If we are not the kingdom of saints that the early Zionists aspired to, a few important features have nevertheless survived of the faded dream. I mean, in Israel, by and large, the moral fibre of society has remained relatively intact. It makes life in Israel so worthwhile, despite the hardships and constant dangers. You can see this moral fibre in the attitude to human life, which remains sacrosanct despite the inevitable brutalisation of living in constant war. You can see it in the fact that, thank God, we remain a free society.

Even this is surprising in a way. In a country that has lived through thirty years of military emergency, where the military consideration has, of necessity, been paramount over all other considerations, you would have expected long ago a government by tall, tough, crew-cut colonels —hard men, hardened by strife. Fortunately we are not governed by a military junta but until recently by a bunch of septuagenarians and, at times, wishy-washy civilians. People often speak of the Israeli miracle, making the desert bloom and so forth, but this is no miracle at all when you have the physical means. You did much the same thing in Egypt; and the Americans did it in Arizona. The true miracle of the Israeli enterprise is the moral fibre, the fact that we have remained an intensely civilian society, a fanatically civilian people. A lifetime of war has hardly enhanced the so-called martial virtues. We may be fighting our enemies like ferocious Spartans, but among ourselves we remain Athenians, as quarrelsome, as self-destructive in our contentiousness, as passionately argumentative—but also as free. There is a lot that is wrong, of course, with the political system, which the old East European establishment bequeathed to us. Many of us would like very much to change this system. The important thing is that we have remained free, and because of this, I think we'll be able to change it.

Hassan: Even your enemies would want to concede, perhaps grudgingly, that moral fibre of which you speak. I definitely think that it's to your credit. Your complacency, conceit and inertia sometimes drive me to despair of peace, but I draw new hope when I see that Israel still manages to produce army men like Meir Pail and Mati Peled (retired generals who spearheaded the move within Israel for moderation and territorial compromise), enlightened scholars like Shamir and Bruno, writers like Amos Oz and yourself, journalists like Amos Kenan and Avineri, politicians like Eliav and Ben Aharon. These people hold Israel up to very rigorous standards of humanitarian behaviour, as Weizmann and Buber did in their day.

When I look around me in the Arab world I envy you these humane men of moderation, some of whom even come out of your army. I admire their courage to criticise and I admire the system that permits them to do this. I wish that we had more of both. Still, in the eyes of the Arabs, this moral fibre which is part of the heritage brought to Israel by its present East European rulers is counterbalanced by the rigidities stemming from their past experience. I don't think it will ever be possible for such people to free themselves from the impact of early childhood memories of pogroms.

That is why I am glad to see that a new generation, most of them native-born, is already replacing the old—men of moderation like Aharon Yariv, Yigal Allon, Haim Barlev and Yitzhak Rabin. They at least will not have those old hang-ups about us. They will look at us as normal human beings. They will not think of us either as barbarian Cossacks out for another pogrom or as primitive beings to whom they are bringing the benefits of their superior European civilisation. The Israeli Prime Minister, Yigal Allon, not so long ago, said in a speech in the Knesset, supporting a more conciliatory policy toward the Arabs, that he did not know anything about Munich, he was born in the Galilee. I hope he meant that his political frame of reference is not Europe of 1938 but the Middle East of 1974. I sighed with relief when I heard this. How typical do you think that attitude is?

ELON: It is true that men like Allon and Rabin have fewer hang-ups than Golda Meir. But don't make too much of it. We have a long way to go. This is a real political conflict between two national movements, not a misunderstanding as a result of someone's psychological hang-ups. It will take a lot before even Rabin, and other Israeli politicians of the younger generation, will be more trustful of the Arabs. There must be some reciprocity. The war must end, first. Then, on your side, the threats, the rabble-rousing speeches and the terror must cease.

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If we could at least point to a parallel to the present process of generational change in Israeli politics in similar changes in the Arab countries, we would already have achieved a lot. You're right, to a certain extent, about the changed perception of the younger generation in Israel. Their approach is existential, as the older generation was prompted by ideology. They take Israel for granted, in a simple, straightforward way. They don't feel they have to moralise about it or prove something. Rabin is native-born; he does not feel impelled, as Golda Meir did, to justify his personal and political biography. He tends to be pragmatic where the old leaders appear doctrinaire. For example, he would never say that he does not know what is meant by a Palestinian nation. In this he is quite typical of the younger Israeli-born or Israeli-bred generation. Face to face with the Palestinian Arabs, the old generation in Israel tended to avert their eyes; some resorted to wishful thinking or made sterile and unfair comparisons with the Cossacks. Younger Israelis rarely share this point of view. Even Moshe Dayan has reflected this change. Let me read you a speech he made a few years ago:

> "In my youth I travelled a good deal with my late father through the valley of Esdraelon. We used to meet Arabs. At that time, especially in the winter Arabs wrapped their faces in a kaffiyeh until only their nose and eyes remained exposed. My father was not born in this country. He came from Russia when he was seventeen. He would say to me, "Look, they have the eyes of murderers." But these Arabs were not murderers. It only seemed to my father that in the eyes which peered through the kaffiyeh's folds he saw the same look that he remembered from his Russian *shtetl*. But this didn't make these Arabs into murderers; it was winter and they were just covering their faces from the cold."

I only wish President Sadat, or some other prominent Arab leader, would present a similar speech to make the distinction between his father's image of us and his own perception of the Jew and the modern Israeli today.

Hassan: I'm sure that could help a great deal and push things forward in the right direction, but we can already see the beginning, the first glance of a new perception of Israel, in the eyes of prominent Arabs. True, Sadat has not yet spoken up, nor has Arafat, the leader of the Palestinians. But take, for example, Ali Amin, the new editor-in-chief of the semi-official newspaper, *al-Ahram*, and one of the most prominent men in the country. In a recent interview he gave *Newsweek* he said:

> "The scars will heal very quickly. As it is, most of our fears of Israeli domination have vanished as the result of October 6th. The Arabs now have undreamed-of billions of dollars and a tremendous supply of manpower. Soon we will have a new pool of technical know-how that will make the Middle East a unique part of the world and if we are happy and free and unsuspicious, as I think we will be, we will want the whole world to partake of this new age. We will have everything we need to make our deserts bloom and turn our mud huts into decent houses. Ignorance breeds prejudice and the ignorance will rapidly vanish. The Middle East is where East and West are finally going to come together. Perhaps I am a dreamer but I also see a United States of the Middle East. Israel will not be included in such a grouping in the foreseeable future, but once the Palestinian state is set up, it will obviously have to live in peace with its neighbouring Jewish state. After, there are many hopeful options. The time has come for all of us to develop a more generous vision of the future and to act boldly and decisively. The establishment of a country the Palestinians can call their own will mean finally that the Arab countries and Israel can bury their differences. If you see the emergence of a Palestinian state, and the timing has never been more propitious than right now, I think that you will see an era of freedom and love the likes of which the world has seldom known."

Elon: Such sentiments will certainly be echoed by a lot of Israelis. But does Amin make these statements to the Egyptian public too or only in interviews with the foreign press? You see Dayan was addressing a public audience in Tel Aviv and later published the text in a book.

HASSAN: Amin has not yet written in this vein in *al-Ahram*, but I know that's what he tells Egyptians too. I know he reflects Sadat's point of view and that is also the way prominent Egyptians close to President Sadat speak. This is their basic outlook towards Israel. You ought to see them for what they really are—Egypt's counterpart to the pragmatic, moderate, native-born Israelis, who are now coming up in Israeli politics. Tell me, Amos, are such people soon going to have a majority in the Cabinet?

Elon: I don't know. The Israel Cabinet is a coalition of several political parties, but it does seem that these moderates are gaining a majority at least within the upper echelons of the Labour party, which has always been and still is the kingpin of Israeli politics. As you know, we still have the proportional election system which never gives a single party a clear majority and imposes government by coalition. The whole country is regarded as one constituency: you vote for ideological parties and not for individual candidates. As a consequence, all Israeli Cabinets since 1948 have been coalitions between the dominant Labour party and a half-dozen small splinter parties. The Labour party has always been the biggest party, with between 30 to 36% of the popular vote, but to stay in power, they have to rely on the smaller splinter parties.

Many of us would like to change this antiquated system. It is a remnant of the old days of pioneering, ideally suited to the early society of

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HASSAN: **Over fifty per cent of all Israelis are of Oriental origin. They either emigrated from Arab countries or were born of parents from Morocco, Algeria or Yemen. What influence do you think they will have on Israeli politics?**

ELON: *This is very hard to predict. They or their parents are new in the country—having arrived barely twenty-five years ago, at most—to leave a decisive mark on politics. But they are already quite prominent within local party machines, on municipal councils and on the back benches of the major parties.*

HASSAN: **Most Arabs believe that if only the Oriental Jews were in power, we would get a much better deal. They keep saying that the Oriental Jews are really Arabs and that they would understand us better.**

ELON: *That's an illusion. To illustrate what you say, Sana, at one point, a few years ago, Radio Damascus was beaming special broadcasts of Iraqi or Syrian music into Israel in the hope of stimulating Iraqi patriotism among Israeli Jews of Iraqi origin . . . . By the same reasoning, they broadcast German beer-hall music, introducing the programme with the remark, "And now for our friends from Berlin . . . ." They hoped to make people in Israel homesick for Germany so that they would go back there.*

HASSAN: **That's a good example of how we fail to see one another the way we really are. And it's not funny, it's tragic. I myself think the common Arab belief that Oriental Jews will understand us better is downright naive. My personal experience has been that this is perhaps true only of some middle-class Jews from Egypt who never underwent the kind of persecution that was meted out to Jews in Iraq, Syria or Yemen. Such Egyptian Jews sometimes speak nostalgically** *of la belle vie en Égypte*, **but they represent only a small group among Israel's Oriental Jewry. I don't blame the rest for their bitter feelings. I suppose if I were in their place, and had undergone what they went through, I might feel the same way, but I think that they are just as much prisoners of their past traumas as the East Europeans are of theirs. Let's hope that a new unburdened generation will soon come up.**

ELON: *In the second generation the differences between Israelis of European and of Oriental origin are slowly evening out through education, economic improvement and a shared sense of collective experience. I won't belittle the tremendous difficulties remaining. But intermarriage between European and Oriental Jews is now about twenty per cent, and it is rising at the rate of one per cent annually. At this rate, the entire distinction between European and non-European Israelis may disappear in another thirty or fifty years.*

sixty thousand highly motivated, highly ideological pioneers. It leaves much to be desired in the industrial urban mass society of three million we have today. By giving exaggerated leverage to the small parties in the coalition, it distorts the popular will.

Take, for instance, the National Religious Front. This party hardly represents 10% of the national vote. As a result of its exaggerated leverage, it not only prevents the much needed separation of state and synagogue in Israel but also opposes withdrawal from the West Bank of the Jordan because of the Jewish holy places and historical sites there. Even if the pragmatic moderates gain the upper hand within the ruling Labour Party, it will still be under pressure from the intransigent right.

Hassan: I'm very worried about the undue influence of the religious party.

Elon: So am I. I would like our new borders on the West Bank to answer real security needs. rather than conform to religious sentiment, however salient ancient historical precedence. I would like those new borders to be open, with Arabs and Israelis permitted to cross freely as visitors or residents. But I'm frankly scared by the explosive mixture of religion and chauvinism which is often at the root of the religious party's attitude. It presumes to make territorial claims in the 20th century in the name of what God and Abraham are said to have told each other in the Bronze Age.

Apart from all that, we have a right-wing opposition party, the hard-line Likud, which is even more intransigent than the National Religious Front. The men of Likud have a similar tendency to quote the Bible selectively. In the Bible there is not only a Joshua but also an Isaiah. If the Israeli Labour party doesn't soon sort out its internal problems—the question of succession and generational change within its upper echelons—the Likud opposition may well increase its strength and in the next elections replace the Labour party as the kingpin of our next government coalition.

Hassan: We too, unfortunately, have our hard-liners. They are waiting for an opportunity to pull the rug from under the moderates. What is happening within Egypt and the Arab world is in many ways a mirror image of what is happening in Israel. The hard-liners distrust the Americans. They feel that the most the United States is interested in is crisis management, diffusing hostility by granting the Arabs a few tidbits in return for their oil. They fear that in the long run the United States will leave them in the lurch because the Americans are not interested in a peace settlement which would oblige them to put

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pressure on Israel. They are also worried about Egypt putting all its faith in one man, Henry Kissinger, who, after all, is not an institution.

Then there are still people among us who aspire to the total destruction of Israel. These people in Egypt have many allies among hard-liners in Libya, Iraq, among the Palestinians and most notably in Syria. The Syrians are convinced that the United States is out to isolate the Arabs from their only reliable ally, the Soviet Union. They think that Sadat plays along with the United States because he puts his own immediate gain above the interests of the Syrians and the Palestinians. We Arabs suffer from another handicap. Because Israel is a free society, the public is aware of the limitations of the partial victory in 1973. It feels discouraged and tired of war.

In Israel perhaps it is only at the very top that a few might welcome another war in order to be able to redeem themselves. But in the Arab world, the exact opposite is true. Unfortunately, because Egypt is not a free society, only the very top leaders know that they were in a pinch in the '73 war, and because of that, they have no appetite for a renewal of the conflict. The public, on the other hand, really believes that we *won* that war, and sometimes even screams for a renewal of warfare. There is another danger: because Egypt is a closed society, when new leaders take over from the present ones, they may not have the information which tempered the policies of their predecessors. Even some of the present leaders, unfortunately, have a selective memory. They forget their narrow escape in 1973 and remember, only the illusion of success.

ELON: It sounds like touch and go, Sana. Both in the Arab countries and in Israel. I ask myself if we are going to find the time or the strength to sort it all out internally before it is too late.

There's an old Hasidic tale of the great Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav, who one day was travelling through a wintry mountain region in a carriage pulled by two oxen. When the carriage reached a steep hill, he got off and walked alongside in the mud to ease the animals' burden. The coachman reproached him and urged him to get on again. "I don't want to reach the pearly gates," said the old man, "and find these two oxen there complaining to the Creator that this fat old Jew remained in his seat while they were slaving under the yoke." "But they won't be able to argue that," said the coachman. "They are oxen; it is their job to pull the carriage up the hill." "Yes," said the rabbi, "that is true, but who has the strength to argue with oxen?"

We'll just have to have the strength, Sana, both in Israel and in the Arab countries.

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Mushrooms

Elusive to our spells, these chambers
Tented in grass: we stoop and plod
About the church insanely, like penitents.

White and soft as conjurors' gloves,
Edging like eggs or ears out
Of the field's moist green table.

Wedded with fine hairs to a mystery
They part from when tugged like a plaster,
The thumb stump delicately clogged with soil.

Frightening, the exuded tips and domes!
But still we search and pick, our baskets
Smelling fragrantly of underground caverns.

It's as though if we left them they would bud
Into faces and not, as we know, grow skirts
Which drop to a black lace as the air melts them.

John Fuller

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Norman Cohn

Was there ever a Society of Witches?

Myths & Hoaxes of European Demonology (1)

HUNDREDS OF books and articles have been written about the great European witch-hunt of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, and during the last few years the subject has received more attention from historians than ever before. But that does not mean that nothing remains to be said. On the contrary, the more is written, the more glaring the disagreements.

Were there people who regarded themselves as witches? If so, what did they do, or believe themselves to do? Were they organised, did they hold meetings? What are we to make of covens and sabbats? Again, when and where did the great witch-hunt begin? Who launched it, who perpetuated it, and for what motives? And just how "great" was it—did the numbers of those executed run into thousands, or into tens of thousands, or into hundreds of thousands? On most of these questions there is still no consensus among historians—and even where consensus exists, it is not necessarily correct.

We may start with the stereotype of the witch as it existed at the times when, and the places where, witch-hunting was at its most intense. The profile of that stereotype at least is established beyond all dispute. We possess not only the records of innumerable witch-trials, but also memoirs and manuals by half-a-dozen witch-hunting magistrates; and the figure of the witch that emerges could not be clearer or more detailed.

A WITCH was a human being—usually a woman but sometimes a man or even a child—who was bound to the Devil by a pact or contract, as his servant and assistant.

When the Devil first appeared to a future witch he was clad in flesh and blood. Sometimes his shape was that of an animal but usually it was that of a man, fully and even smartly dressed. Almost always he appeared at a moment of acute distress—of bereavement, or of utter loneliness, or of total destitution. A typical pattern was that an elderly widow, rejected by her neighbours and with nobody to turn to, would be approached by a man who would alternatively console her, promise her money, scare her, extract a promise of obedience from her, in the end mate with her. The money seldom materialised, the copulation was downright painful, but the promise of obedience remained binding. Formally and irrevocably the new witch had to renounce God, Christ, the Christian religion, and pledge herself instead to the service of Satan. Whereupon the Devil set his mark on her—often with the nails or claws of his left hand, and on the left side of the body.

IF BECOMING A WITCH rarely brought either wealth or erotic pleasure, it had other rewards to offer. A witch was able to perform *maleficium* (*i.e.* to harm her neighbours by occult means). The pact meant that the Devil would demand this from his servant, but it also meant that he would supply her with supernatural power for the purpose. With the Devil's aid, a witch could ruin the life of anyone she chose. She could bring sudden

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illness, or mental disorder, or maiming accidents, or death, on man, woman or child. She could bedevil a marriage by producing sterility or miscarriages in the woman, or impotence in the man. She could make cattle sicken or die, or cause hailstorms or unseasonable rain to ruin the crops. This was her reward; for a witch's will, like her master's, was wholly malignant, wholly set on destruction.

Witches were believed to specialise in the killing of babies and small children. More than mere malice was at work here—witches needed the corpses for all sorts of reasons. They were cannibals, with an insatiable craving for very young flesh. According to some writers of the time, to kill, cook and eat a baby which had not yet been baptised was a witch's greatest pleasure. But the flesh of infants was also full of supernatural power. As an element in magical concoctions it could be used to kill other human beings, or else to enable a captured witch to keep silent under torture. It could also be blended in a salve which, applied to a witch's body, enabled her to fly.

At regular intervals witches were required to betake themselves to the sacrilegious and orgiastic gatherings known first as "synagogues", later as "sabbats." There were ordinary sabbats, which were usually held on Fridays and were small affairs, involving only the witches of a given neighbourhood; and there were oecumenical sabbats, held with great ceremony three or four times a year, and attended by witches from all quarters. A sabbat was always a nocturnal happening, ending either at midnight, or, at the very latest, at cockcrow. As for the locality, it might be a churchyard, a crossroads, the foot of a gallows; though the larger sabbats were commonly held at the summit of some famous mountain in a faraway region.

TO ATTEND THE SABBAT, and in particular to attend the oecumenical sabbat, witches had to cover great distances in very little time. They did so by flying. Having anointed themselves with the magic salve they would fly straight out of their bedrooms, borne aloft on demonic rams, goats, pigs, oxen, black horses; or else on sticks, shovels, spits, broomsticks. And meanwhile the husband or wife would sleep on peacefully, quite unaware of these strange happenings. Sometimes a stick laid in the bed would take not only the place but also the appearance of the absent spouse. Thanks to this arrangement, some witches were able to deceive their mates for years on end.

The very numerous accounts of the sabbat differ from one another only in minor details, so it is easy to construct a representative picture. The sabbat was presided over by the Devil, who now took on the shape not of a mere man but of a monstrous being, half man and half goat: a hideous black man with enormous horns, a goat's beard and goat's legs, sometimes also with bird's claws instead of hands and feet. He sat on a high ebony throne. Light streamed from his horns, flames spouted from his huge eyes. The expression of his face was one of immense gloom, his voice was harsh and terrible to hear.

THE TERM "SABBAT" was of course taken from the Jewish religion, which was traditionally regarded as the quintessence of anti-Christianity, indeed as a form of Devil-worship. For the sabbat was above all an assertion of the Devil's mastery over his servants, the witches.

First the witches knelt down and prayed to the Devil, calling him Lord and God, and repeating their renunciation of the Christian faith; after which each in turn kissed him, often on his left foot, his genitals or his anus. Next delinquent witches reported for punishment, which usually consisted of whippings. In Roman Catholic countries witches would confess their sins—for instance, attending church—and the Devil would impose whippings as a penance. But everywhere witches who had missed a sabbat, or who had performed insufficient *maleficia*, were soundly whipped. Then came the parody of divine service. Dressed in black vestments, with mitre and surplice, the Devil would preach a sermon, warning his followers against reverting to Christianity and promising them a far more blissful paradise than the Christian heaven. Seated again on his black chair, with the king and queen of the witches on either side of him, he would receive the offerings of the faithful—cakes and flour, poultry and corn, sometimes money.

The proceedings ended in a climax of profanity. Once more the witches adored the Devil and kissed his anus, while he acknowledged their attentions in a peculiarly noxious manner. A parody of the Eucharist was given, in both kinds —but what was received was an object like the sole of a shoe, black, bitter and hard to chew, and a jug full of nauseous black liquid. After this a meal would be served; and often this too would consist of revolting substances—fish and

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meat tasting like rotten wood, wine tasting like manure drainings, the flesh of babies.

Finally, an orgiastic dance, to the sound of trumpets, drums and fifes. The witches would form a circle, facing outwards, and dance around a witch standing bent over, her head touching the ground, with a candle stuck in her anus to serve as illumination. The dance would become a frantic and erotic orgy, in which all things, including sodomy and incest, were permitted. At the height of the orgy the Devil would copulate with every man, woman and child present. Finally he would bring the sabbat to a close by sending the participants off to their homes, with instructions to perform every conceivable *maleficium* against their Christian neighbours.

THAT IS HOW WITCHES were imagined when and where witch-hunting was at its height. It will be observed that they were thought of as a collectivity. Though they perform *maleficium* individually, they are a society, assembling at regular intervals, bound together by communal rites, subject to a rigid, centralised discipline. In every respect they represent a collective inversion of Christianity—and an inversion of a kind that could only be achieved by former Christians. That is why non-Christians, such as Jews and Gypsies, though they might be accused of *maleficium,* were never accused of being witches in the full sense of the term. Witchcraft was regarded as apostasy—and apostasy in its most extreme, most systematic, most highly organised form. Witches were regarded as above all a sect of Devil-worshippers.

Origins of a Theory

HOW DID THIS STRANGE stereotype come into being?

Ever since historical research into these matters began, in the second quarter of the 19th century, two principal explanations have been offered. (*1*) Some scholars have argued that a sect of witches really existed, and that the authorities who pursued and tried witches were in effect breaking the local organisations of that sect. (*2*) Others have argued that the notion of a sect of witches first developed as a by-product of the campaign of the Inquisition against Catharism, and that the stereotype was first used in a massive inquisitorial witch-hunt that claimed hundreds of victims in southern France during the 14th century.

When it was first propounded, the first of these two theories represented a radical innovation. In the 18th and early 19th centuries practically no educated person believed that there had ever been a sect of witches. It is only since around 1830 that this has gradually ceased to be taken for granted. Not, of course, that those scholars who have maintained that there really was a sect of witches have claimed that the sect did all those things it was originally believed to do. They have not argued that witches flew through the air to the sabbat, or that the Devil presided over it in corporeal form. But they have argued, and very forcibly, that witches were organised in groups under recognised leaders; that they adhered to a religious cult that was not only non-Christian but anti-Christian; and that they assembled, under cover of night, at remote spots, to perform the rituals of that cult.

On this view, what we find in the witch-trials and the writings of witch-hunters represents a distorted perception of groups that really existed, of meetings that physically took place. Propounded by academics at leading universities in Europe and North America, often in works published by university presses, this interpretation has been taken on trust by multitudes of educated people. It still is. When conversation turns to the great witch-hunt, it is assumed more often than not that the hunt must have been directed against a real secret society.

THE FOUNDING OF THIS SCHOOL OF THOUGHT has sometimes been ascribed to the Italian cleric Girolamo Tartarotti-Serbati (who published *Del Congresso Notturno delle Lamie* in 1749), or else to the great German folk-lorist Jacob Grimm (on account of certain passages in his *Deutsche Mythologie*, first published in 1835); but in both cases wrongly. Tartarotti and Grimm merely drew attention to the fact that folk beliefs dating from pre-Christian times had contributed something to the stereotype. Neither even hinted that the great witch-hunt was directed against an anti-Christian sect.

The first modern scholar to advance that view seems to have been Karl Ernst Jarcke. In 1828, when Jarcke was a young professor of criminal law at the University of Berlin, he edited the records of a 17th-century German witch-trial for a legal journal, and appended some brief comments of his own. He argued that witchcraft was above all a nature religion that had once been the religion of the pagan Germans. After the establishment

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of Christianity this religion survived, with its traditional ceremonies and sacraments, as a living tradition among the common people; but it took on a new significance. The Church condemned it as Devil-worship, and in the end this view of the matter was adopted even by those who, in secret, still practised it. At the core of the old pagan religion were secret arts for influencing the course of nature—arts which, in the view both of the adherents of that religion and of the Christian clergy, depended on the Devil for their efficacy. As the Christian religion became the religion of the common people, the practice of those arts came to be regarded, and experienced, as a conscious, voluntary service of the evil principle. To be initiated into them was to choose the Devil's service. That explains why, in the later form of witch-belief, anyone adept in those arts was expected to employ them for the purpose of harming others, *i.e.* was expected to perform *maleficia*.[1]

A VARIATION on the theme was produced in 1839 by the historian Franz Josef Mone, who after a brilliant academic career was at that time director of the archives of Baden. He too saw witchcraft as a cult deriving from pre-Christian times—only in his view its origin lay not in the religion of the ancient Germans as such but in an underground, esoteric cult practised by the lowest strata of the population.

The Germanic peoples who sojourned on the north coast of the Black Sea come in contact with the cult of Hecate and the cult of Dionysos, and the slave elements in the population adopted these cults and fused them into a religion of their own. This religion was characterised by the worship of a goat-like god, the celebration of nocturnal orgies and the practice of magic and poison. As the Germanic peoples moved west, the religion came with them. But free-born men and women regarded it with contempt. At all times it stood in opposition to the official religion of society, and it continued to do so when that religion was Christianity. The underground religion was witchcraft. Witches were therefore members of "a fully organised secret society" with roots in the distant past; and the Devil who presided over the sabbat was a distorted version of Dionysos. Even the *maleficia* against domestic animals, which bulk so large in the trials, might well reflect the fact that the Bacchantes, in their frenzy, used to kill does and fawns.[2]

Michelet's Witch

NEITHER OF THESE THEORIES is convincing. Neither Jarcke nor Mone can show that the worship of ancient gods, whether Germanic or Greek, was in fact practised by organised, clandestine groups in the Middle Ages. Nor do they even try to explain why such groups, after passing unnoticed for the best part of a thousand years, should have attracted ever-increasing attention in the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries. Yet both men were serious scholars; and between them they started a hare which other scholars, some of them equally serious, have continued to pursue at intervals right down to the present day.

Jarcke and Mone were ardent Roman Catholics—in fact both of them at times acted as journalistic spokesmen for the clerical interest. Moreover they propounded their theories in the midst of the reaction against the French Revolution and its consequences, when a horrified obsession with secret societies was very widespread in conservative circles.[3] They had no sympathy at all for the secret society of witches that they supposed to have existed. In their eyes it was a thoroughly

Devil and Witch (1493)

[1] K. E. Jarcke, "Ein Hexenprozess", in *Annalen der deutschen und ausländischen Criminal-Rechts-Pflege*, vol. I (Berlin, 1828) esp. p. 450.
[2] F. J. Mone, "Ueber das Hexenwesen", in *Anzeiger für Kunde der teutschen Vorzeit*, Jahrgang 8 (Karlsruhe, 1839) esp. pp. 271–5, 444–53.
[3] J. M. Roberts, *The Mythology of the Secret Societies* (London, 1972).

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evil conspiracy against the true religion and the true Church.

But the opposite view also found a spokesman, in Jules Michelet. In *La Sorcière* (1862) he portrays witchcraft as a justified, if hopeless, protest by medieval serfs against the social order that was crushing them.

MICHELET IMAGINES serfs coming together secretly, at night, to perform ancient pagan dances, with which they blended satirical farces directed against lord and priest. This, he thinks, happened already in the 12th and 13th centuries. In the 14th, when both the Church and the nobility were largely discredited, the sabbat turned into a ritualised defiance of the existing social order, epitomised by the Christian God. Michelet calls it "the black mass." At its centre he puts not the Devil, nor a man impersonating the Devil, but a woman—a female serf in her thirties

> with a face like Medea, a beauty born of sufferings, a deep, tragic, feverish gaze, with a torrent of black, untamable hair falling as chance takes it, like waves of serpents. Perhaps, on top, a crown of vervain, like ivy from tombs, like violets of death.[4]

This romantic figure is the priestess of the cult. Indeed, Michelet credits her with inventing, organising and staging the entire sabbat. She induces peasants to give food for the communal meal—knowing that those who do so will find themselves committed to a conspiracy. She sets up a giant wooden figure, hairy, horned, with a great penis. It represents Satan, imagined as "the great serf in revolt", a rebel against the God who unjustly cast him out of heaven. But he is also himself a sort of nature god, "who makes plants germinate", who even "found Nature prostrate, cast out by the Church like a dirty baby, and picked Nature up and put it in his breast."

At the sabbat the priestess ritually mates with Satan. Before the assembled multitude, she seats herself on his lap and, in a simulated copulation, receives his spirit. Later, after the banquet and the dance, she turns herself into an altar. A man disguised as a demon makes offerings on her prostrate body. Corn is offered to Satan to ensure a good harvest, a cake is cooked on her back and distributed as Eucharist. Finally, the priestess shouts defiance at the Christian God; while a horde of "demons" rush out and jump over fires, to cure the assembled peasants of their fear of hell-fire.

NOW, NONE OF THIS FIGURES in any contemporary account of the witches' sabbat. Not one mentions a priestess, or so much as hints that a single woman dominates the ritual. As for the "black mass" celebrated on a woman's back—that notion was born in an entirely different historical context: the "affair of the poisons", which took place in Paris around 1680.[5] Nor was the sabbat, even at its first appearance, imagined as a festival of serfs—already in 1460, at Arras, rich and powerful burghers were accused of attending it, along with humbler folk. To give his account even a shadow of plausibility, Michelet has to pretend that all extant accounts of the sabbat date from the period of its decadence; the true, original sabbat being something quite different. The argument is not likely to commend itself to historians.

Even so, the accounts of the sabbat that we do possess confront Michelet with some pretty problems. Some stock features are simply passed over in silence—not a word is said, for instance, about *maleficium*. But with others he copes as best he can. He is exercised by the tales of erotic orgies, with their stress on incest. There cannot, he assures us, have been any open promiscuity, as young children were present. On the other hand, he admits that incest may have occurred, discreetly, and he even offers two mutually exclusive explanations to account for it. Perhaps incest is to be understood in terms of a medieval law which extended the forbidden degrees to include cousins six times removed. Or perhaps, on the other hand, the priestess, being a woman and sympathising with women, encouraged sons to mate with their mothers, so that mothers could be assured of a roof over their heads in old age. Again, innumerable contemporary accounts refer to the fact that Satan's seed, when received by the witches, felt cold. Michelet suggests that whatever mating took place at the sabbat must have been followed by an icy "purification", to prevent conception. As for the babies which were supposedly eaten at the sabbat, these were simply models of babies, made to look like meat. Placed on the back of the priestess, they represented the People. When serfs partook of them—or went through the motions—the People were simply worshipping the People, in truly democratic spirit.

[4] J. Michelet, *La Sorcière*, chap. xi (p. 128 in the edition by P. Viallaneix, Paris, 1966).

[5] G. Mongrédien, *Madame de Montespan et l'affaire des poisons* (Paris, 1953).

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That is what *La Sorcière* has to say about the sabbat. Despite the special pleading, the suppression of texts, and the fatuities of exegesis on which the interpretation depends, it was not without influence. For in *La Sorcière* Michelet deployed all those visionary and poetic gifts that make him so compelling a historian. Though he protested that the book was free from emotional romancing, was indeed the most unquestionably true of all his works, the opposite is the case.

La Sorcière was written when Michelet was sixty-four, and it was written fast. The two chapters on the sabbat took a day each, almost the whole book was finished in two months. Driven by a passionate urge to rehabilitate two oppressed classes—women, and the medieval peasantry—the ageing romantic radical had neither time nor desire for detailed research. The result was an imaginative creation of such power that it has continued to be reprinted, and read, and taken seriously, for generation after generation. In a general sense it seems to have influenced even some highly sophisticated French historians of today. Professor Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, for instance, in his monumental work *Les paysans de Languedoc* (1966), still presents sabbats as real meetings in which the peasant urge to revolt found symbolic expression.[6]

But *La Sorcière* also contains hints of a different interpretation. In passing, Michelet suggests that the sabbat was really the celebration of a fertility cult, aimed at securing abundance of crops. At the hands of later scholars this notion was to undergo some startling elaborations.

Margaret Murray's Myth

IN HIS NOTES TO *The Waste Land*, T. S. Eliot lists, as one of the works to which he was most indebted, *The Golden Bough* by Sir James Frazer—"a work of anthropology . . . which has influenced our generation profoundly." Unlike some of Eliot's other notes, this one was perfectly serious. First published in 1890, reissued with enlargements in twelve volumes between 1907 and 1915, *The Golden Bough* had indeed launched a cult of fertility cults. At least in the English-speaking world it became fashionable to interpret all kinds of rituals as derivatives of a magic originally performed to encourage the breeding of animals and the growth of plants, and to see in the most diverse gods and heroes so many disguises for the spirit of vegetation. It was to be expected that this kind of interpretation would be applied also to the history of European witchcraft; and so it was, in *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*, by Margaret Murray. The year was 1921, and the influence of *The Golden Bough* was at its height. (*The Waste Land*, with Eliot's comment, appeared the following year.[7])

The impact of *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* has been extraordinary. For some forty years (1929–68) the article on "WITCHCRAFT" in successive editions of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* was by Margaret Murray, and it simply summarised the book's argument, as though it were a matter of established fact. By 1962 a scholar was moved to comment with dismay:

> The Murrayites seem to hold . . . an almost undisputed sway at the higher intellectual levels. There is, amongst educated people, a very widespread impression that Professor Margaret Murray has discovered the true answer to the problem of the history of European witchcraft and has proved her theory.[8]

Since that was written the Murrayite cause has received formidable reinforcements. The Oxford University Press, the original publishers of *The Witch-Cult*, re-issued it in 1962 as a paperback, which has been frequently reprinted since and is still selling well.

In a foreword to this new edition the eminent medievalist Sir Steven Runciman praises the thoroughness of the author's scholarship and makes it plain that he fully accepts her basic theory. Some leading historians of 17th-century England have shown themselves equally trusting. Even among scholars specialising in the history of witchcraft the book has exercised and—as we shall see—continues to exercise considerable influence. It has also inspired a whole library of new works, which have disseminated the doctrine among more or less serious readers. It is significant that in Britain even that respectable series, Pelican books, having published an anti-Murrayite work on witchcraft by Professor Geoffrey Parrinder in 1958, replaced it in 1965 by the Murrayite work of the late Pennethorne Hughes.

More dramatically, *The Witch-Cult* and its progeny have stimulated the extraordinary

[6] E. Le Roy Ladurie, *Les paysans de Languedoc* (Paris, 1966), pp. 407–14.

[7] Margaret Murray first expounded her views a few years earlier, in two articles in *Folk-Lore*, vols. XXVIII (1917) and XXXI (1920).

[8] E. Rose, *A Razor for a Goat* (Toronto, 1962) pp. 14–15.

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proliferation of "witches' covens" in Western Europe and the United States during the past decade, culminating in the foundation of the Witches International Craft Association, with headquarters in New York. In 1970 the association, under the leadership of Dr Leo Martello and his "high priestess" Witch Hazel, held "the world's first public Witch-In for Halloween" in Central Park. Even Margaret Murray, one imagines, would have been surprised by the development of the Witches' Liberation Movement, with its plans for a Witches' Day Parade, a Witches' News Service, a Witches' Lecture Bureau, and a Witches' Anti-Defamation League.[9]

THE ARGUMENT PRESENTED in *The Witch-Cult* and elaborated in its successor *The God of the Witches* (1933) can be summarised as follows:

Down to the 17th century a religion which was far older than Christianity persisted throughout Western Europe, with followers in every social stratum from kings to peasants. It centred on the worship of a two-faced, horned god, known to the Romans as Dianus or Janus. This "Dianic cult" was a religion of the type so abundantly described in *The Golden Bough*. The horned god represented the cycle of the crops and the seasons, and was thought of as periodically dying and returning to life. In society he was represented by selected human beings. At national level these included such celebrated personages as William Rufus, Thomas à Becket, Joan of Arc and Gilles de Rais, whose dramatic deaths were really ritual sacrifices carried out to ensure the resurrection of the god and the renewal of the earth. At village level the god was represented by the horned personage who presided over the witches' assemblies. Hostile observers, such as inquisitors, naturally took this personage to be, or at least to represent, the Devil; so that to them witchcraft seemed a form of Satan-worship. In reality, the witches were simply worshipping the pre-Christian deity Dianus. If they appeared to kiss their master's behind, that was because he wore a mask which, like the god himself, had two faces.

The preservation of the Dianic cult was largely the work of an aboriginal race, which had been driven into hiding by successive waves of invaders. These refugees were of small stature—which was the reality behind stories of "the little people", or fairies. Shy and elusive, they nevertheless had sufficient contact with the ordinary population to transmit the essentials of their religion. The witches were their disciples and intellectual heirs.

The organisation of the Dianic cult was based on the local coven, which always consisted of thirteen members—twelve ordinary members, male and female, and one officer. The members of a coven were obliged to attend the weekly meetings, which Dr Murray calls "*esbats*", as well as the larger assemblies, or sabbats proper. Discipline was strict. Failure to attend a meeting, or to carry out the instructions given there, was punished with such a beating that sometimes the culprit died. The resulting structure was remarkably tough. Throughout the Middle Ages the Dianic cult was the dominant religion, Christianity little more than a veneer. It was only with the coming of the Reformation that Christianity achieved enough hold over the population to launch an open attack on its rival—the result being the great witch-hunt.

MARGARET MURRAY was not by profession a historian but an Egyptologist, archaeologist, and folklorist. Her knowledge of European history, even of English history, was superficial and her grasp of historical method was non-existent. In the special field of witchcraft studies, she seems never to have read any of the modern histories of the persecution; and even if she had, she would not have assimilated them. By the time she turned her attention to these matters she was nearly sixty, and her ideas were firmly set in an exaggerated and distorted version of the Frazerian mould. For the rest of her days (and she lived to 100) she clung to those ideas with a tenacity which no criticism, however well-informed or well-argued, could ever shake.

There has been no lack of such criticism. George Lincoln Burr, Cecil L'Estrange Ewen, Professor Rossell Hope Robbins, Mr Elliot Rose, Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper, Mr Keith Thomas are among those who, from the 1920s to the 1970s, have either weighed the theory and found it wanting, or else have dismissed it as unworthy of consideration. But other scholars have taken a different view and have maintained that beneath its manifest exaggerations, the theory contains a core of truth.

The reason is given by Arno Runeberg in his book *Witches, Demons and Fertility Magic* (1947). He points out that some of the accounts of witches' assemblies quoted by Murray have no fantastic features but are perfectly plausible. The

[9] Florence Hershman, *Witchcraft U.S.A.* (New York, 1971), pp. 149–56.

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witches go to and from the sabbat not by flying but on foot or on horseback; the "Devil" has nothing supernatural about him but sits at the head of the table like an ordinary man; the meal is quite unremarkable; the participants even specify who supplied the food and drink. Runeberg concludes:

> That such drinking-bouts should be only hallucinations . . . is indeed curious. Neither is it probable that the persecutors by leading questions would have caused people to tell such stories.[10]

According to this view these commonplace happenings, themselves perhaps neither very frequent nor very widespread, represent the reality around which fantasies clustered, gradually building up the whole phantasmagoria of the witches' sabbat as we find it in other and better known accounts. It would be a powerful argument if the accounts quoted by Murray were really as sober as they appear to be. But are they? The only way to find out is to examine her sources in their original contexts—a tiresome task, but one which is long overdue.

The Devil embracing a young woman (1489).

THE RELEVANT PASSAGES in *The Witch-Cult* carry references to some fifteen primary sources, mostly English or Scottish pamphlets describing notorious trials. Now, of all these sources only one is free from manifestly fantastic and impossible features—and even in that one the Devil, though "a bonny young lad with a blue bonnet", has the conventional requirements of a cold body and cold semen, and gladly mates with a witch aged eighty.[11] To appreciate the true import of the other sources one has only to compare, in a half dozen instances, what Murray quotes with what she passes over in silence.

The activities of the Lancashire witches who were tried in 1612 are represented by the following excerpts from a contemporary pamphlet:[12]

> The persons aforesaid had to their dinners beef, bacon and roasted mutton; which mutton (as this witness's said brother said) was of a wether of Christopher Swyers of Barley: which wether was brought in the night before into this witness's mother's house by the said James Device, this witness's said brother: and in this witness's sight killed and eaten. . . . And before their said parting away, they all appointed to meet at the said Preston's wife's house that day twelvemonth; at which time the said Preston's wife promised to make them a great feast.

After which they "went out of the said house in their own shapes and likenesses. And they all as soon as they were out of doors, got on horseback, like foals, some of one colour, some of another."[13]

The Devil, it will be noted, does not figure at all in this account; and one would never guess how large a part the demonic powers played in the trial as a whole. The key witness was a 9-year-old girl, Jennet Device, who gave evidence against her mother, her grandmother, and her brother. Now, according to young Jennet, a spirit in the form of a brown dog called Ball approached her mother and asked what she wished him to do; and on her instructions killed three men by occult means. She had also listened to a black dog called Dandy having a similar conversation with her brother James; after which Dandy contrived the death of an old woman.[14]

The Somerset trials of 1664 are regarded by Murray as particularly illuminating. She quotes

[10] A. Runeberg, *Witches, Demons and Fertility Magic* (Helsingfors, 1947), pp. 230–1.

[11] R. Burns Begg, "Notice of Trials for Witchcraft at Crook of Devon, Kinross-shire, in 1662", in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, vol. XXII (Edinburgh, 1888), pp. 212 seq., 223.

[12] In this and the following quotations I have modernised the spelling and replaced a few obsolete words by their modern equivalents.

[13] Margaret Murray, *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 139, 99.

[14] T. Potts, *Discovery of Witches in the County of Lancashire reprinted from the original edition of 1613* (Manchester, 1845).

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from the evidence of Elizabeth Styles:

> At their meeting they have usually wine and good beer, cakes, meat or the like. They eat and drink really when they meet in their bodies, dance also and have music. The man in black sits at the higher end, and Anne Bishop usually next him. He uses some words before meat, and none after, his voice is audible, and very low.

She does not quote the sentence immediately preceding: "At every meeting the Spirit vanishes away, he appoints the next meeting place and time, and at his departure there is a foul smell." Nor is there any mention of certain other details supplied by the same witness. For Elizabeth Styles said that, while the Devil sometimes appeared to her as a man, he usually did so in the form of a dog, a cat or a fly; as a fly, he was apt to suck at the back of her head. He also provided his followers with oil with which to anoint their foreheads and wrists—which enabled them to be carried in a moment to and from the meetings. On the other hand, Elizabeth added that sometimes the meetings were attended by the witches' spirits only, their bodies remaining at home.[15]

A Scot herself, Margaret Murray draws heavily on the records of Scottish trials for her material. A typical source, covering both the feast at the sabbat and the return from it, is the confession of Helen Guthrie, one of the alleged witches tried at Forfar in 1661. *The Witch-Cult* gives the following excerpts:

> They went to Mary Rynd's house and sat down together at the table, the devil being present at the head of it; and some of them went to John Benny's house, he being a brewer, and brought ale from hence . . . and others of them went to Alexander Hieche's and brought aqua vitae from thence, and thus made themselves merry; and the devil made much of them all, but especially of Mary Rynd, and he kissed them all except the said Helen herself, whose hand only he kissed; and she and Jonet Stout sat opposite one to another at the table.[16]
>
> Herself, Isobell Shyrie and Elspet Alexander, did meet together at a house near to Barrie, a little before sunset, after they had stayed in the said house about the space of an hour drinking three pints of ale together, they went forth to the sands, and there three other women met them, and the devil was there present with them all . . . and they parted so late that night that she could get no lodging, but was forced to lie at a dike side all night.

All very normal—until one looks at the original source and discovers what those sets of dots represent. With the lacunae filled in the passages read as follows:

> . . . and brought ale from hence, and they (went) through at a little hole like bees, and took the substance of the ale. . . .
>
> and the Devil was there present with them all, in the shape of a great horse; and they decided on the sinking of a ship, lying not far off from Barrie, and presently the said company appointed herself to take hold of the cable tow, and to hold it fast until they did return, and she herself did presently take hold of the cable tow, and the rest with the Devil went into the sea upon the said cable, as she thought, and about the space of an hour thereafter, they returned all in the same likeness as before, except that the Devil was in the shape of a man upon his return, and the rest were sorely fatigued. . . .[17]

After this it comes as no surprise to learn that another member of the group was accustomed to turn herself into a horse, shod with horse-shoes, and in that guise transport her fellow witches, and even the Devil himself, to and from the sabbat —with the result that the following day she was confined to bed with sore hands. Nor is it unexpected that the Forfar witches should sometimes have had less ordinary meals than those described above. In the event they confessed to digging up the corpse of a baby, making a pie of its flesh, and eating it. The purpose was to prevent themselves from ever confessing to their witchcraft—just as, in earlier centuries, members of certain heretical groups were supposed to have been inwardly and irrevocably bound to their sect by consuming the ashes of babies' bodies. In the case of the Forfar witches it was a vain hope, for in Scottish trials torture was commonly employed until a confession was obtained.

SIMILAR USE is made of Isobel Gowdie's confession (or rather confessions, for under increasing pressure she made four) at Auldearn, in Nairn, in 1662:

> We would go to several houses in the night time. We were at Candlemas last in Grangehill, where we got meat and drink enough. The Devil sat at the head of the table, and all the Coven about. That night he desired Alexander Elder in Earlseat to say the grace before meat, which he did; and is this: "We eat this meat in the Devil's name" (etc.) And then we began to eat. And when we had ended eating, we looked steadfastly to the Devil, and bowing ourselves to him, we said to the Devil, We thank thee, our Lord, for this.—We killed an ox, in Burgie, about the dawning of the day, and we brought the ox with us home to Aulderne, and feasted on it.[18]

The simple dash between the two stories conceals much, including the following items:

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[15] J. Glanvill, *Sadducismus Triumphatus* (London, 1689), pp. 353–4.
[16] Murray, *Witch-Cult*, pp. 141, 98.
[17] (G. R. Kinloch, ed.), *Reliquiae Antiquae Scoticae, illustrative of civil and ecclesiastical affairs* (Edinburgh, 1848), pp. 121–8.
[18] Murray, *Witch-Cult*, pp. 141–2.

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> All the coven did fly like cats, jackdaws, hares and rooks, etc., but Barbara Ronald, in Brightmanney, and I always rode on a horse, which we would make of a straw or a bean-stalk. Bessie Wilson was always in the likeness of a rook. . . . (The Devil) would be like a heifer, a bull, a deer, a roe, or a dog, etc., and have dealings with us; and he would hold up his tail while we kissed his arse.

Isobel Gowdie had much more to say. When she and her associates went to the sabbat they would place in the bed, beside their husbands, a broom or a three-legged stool, which promptly took on the appearance of a woman. At the sabbat they made a plough of a ram's horn and yoked frogs to it, using grass for the traces. As the plough went round the fields, driven by the Devil with the help of the male officer of the coven, the women followed it, praying to the Devil that the soil might yield only thistles and briars.

Murray cites Isobel Gowdie as an example of a witch who rode to and from meetings on horseback; the proof being Isobel's own words, "I had a little horse, and would say, 'Horse and Hattock, in the Devil's name!'" This, however, is the very phrase that fairies were believed to use as they flew from place to place. The rest of Isobel's account shows that, in a desperate effort to find enough material to satisfy her interrogators and torturers, she did indeed draw on the local fairy lore:

> I had a little horse, and would say, "Horse and Hattock, in the Devil's name!" And then we would fly away, where we would, even as straws fly upon a highway. We would fly like straws when we please; wild-straws and corn-straws will be horses to us, if we put them between our feet and say, "Horse and Hattock, in the Devil's name!" If anyone sees these straws in a whirlwind, and do not bless themselves, we may shoot them dead at our pleasure. Any that are shot by us, their souls will go to Heaven, but their bodies remain with us, and will fly as our horses, as small as straws. I was in the Downie-hills, and got meat from the Queen of Fairie, more than I could eat. The Queen of Fairie is bravely clothed in white linen. . . .

At this point Isobel's interrogators cut her short: she was straying too far from the demonological material they required. After a further three weeks in gaol she produced a version in which the fairies were duly integrated into the Devil's kingdom. The Devil himself, she asserted, shaped "elf-arrow-heads" and handed them over to small hunch-backed elves, who sharpened them and in turn passed them to the witches for shooting. As the witches had no bows, they flicked the arrows from their thumb-nails as they sailed overhead on their straws and bean-stalks; and the arrows killed those they hit, even through a coat of armour.[19] This is the passage that led Murray to her theory about the fugitive aboriginal race; others will interpret it in a different sense. Certainly we are a long, long way from those commonplace feastings at Grangehill and Auldearn.

AT THE RISK OF SOME REPETITIOUSNESS I will add one further sample, concerning the famous sabbat supposed to have been held at a (non-existent) place called Blokulla, or Blockula, in Sweden, in 1669. Murray quotes the following passages from a contemporary English translation of a German pamphlet:

> Another boy confessed too that one day he was carried away by his mistress, and to perform the journey he took his own father's horse out of the meadow where it was, and upon his return she let the horse go in her own ground. The next morning the boy's father sought for his horse, and not finding it, gave it over for lost; but the boy told him the whole story, and so his father fetched the horse back again. . . . In a huge large room of this house, they said, there stood a very long table, at which the witches did sit down. . . . They sat down to table, and those that the Devil esteemed most, were placed nearest to him, but the children must stand at the door, where he himself gives them meat and drink. The diet they did use to have there, was, they said, broth and colworts and bacon in it, oatmeal, bread spread with butter, milk and cheese. And they added that sometimes it tasted very well, and sometimes very ill.[20]

The reader would hardly divine what followed the meal. The Devil mated with all the women present, and in due course they produced sons and daughters for him, who then married one another, and brought forth toads and serpents. Nor could one guess what other means of transportation were available for that same journey: "For their journey, they said they made use of all sorts of instruments, of beasts, of men, of spits and posts, according as they had the opportunity; if they do ride upon goats, and have many children with them, so that all may have room, they stick a spit into the back-side of the goat, and then are anointed with the aforesaid ointment"—which enables the whole party to fly through the air "over churches and high walls."[21]

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[19] R. Pitcairn, *Criminal Trials* . . . (Edinburgh, 1833), vol. III, Appendix, pp. 604–613.

[20] Murray, *Witch-Cult*, pp. 100, 144.

[21] A. Horneck (trans.), *An Account of what happened in the Kingdom of Sweden in the years 1669, 1670* . . . (London, 1688), p. 584. This translation of a German pamphlet forms an appendix to Glanvill's *Sadducismus Triumphatus*.

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Fertility Magicians?

MARGARET MURRAY is of course aware of these fantastic features—but she nevertheless contrives, by the way she arranges her quotations, to give the impression that a number of perfectly sober, realistic accounts of the sabbat exist. They do not; and the implications of that fact are, or should be, self-evident. Stories which have manifestly impossible features are not to be trusted in any particular, as evidence of what physically happened. Since the stories of witches' sabbats adduced by Murray abound in such features, they are to be strongly distrusted. As soon as the methods of historical criticism are applied to her argument that women really met to worship a fertility god, under the supervision of the god's human representatives, it is seen to be just as fanciful as the argument which Michelet had propounded, with far greater poetic power, some sixty years earlier.

If Arno Runeberg had troubled to trace Murray's quotations back to their origins, he would perhaps never have produced *Witches, Demons and Fertility Magic* at all. But once published—by the Finnish Academy of Sciences in 1947—the book lent new credibility to Murray's central thesis. For it is by no means an unsophisticated work. It contains a mass of valuable information about European folk-beliefs, much of it directly relevant to the age-old popular image of the witch. It has no use at all for such fancies as the aboriginal race of dwarfs, or even for the Dianic cult in the sense of a homogeneous religion. Precisely because it avoids such eccentricities it has persuaded some serious historians, right down to the present day, that the witchcraft we hear of at the close of the Middle Ages was indeed derived from a fertility cult.[22]

Runeberg starts from prehistoric times. In a world still dominated by the wilderness, primitive hunters and farmers developed a form of magic which was intended to influence the spirits of forests and rivers and mountains. Popular fertility rites, such as have survived in many peasant communities almost to the present day, are derived from that magic. But apart from these rites, which were celebrated publicly, with the whole village participating, there existed a secret art, known only to specialists, *i.e.* to professional magicians. These magicians were men and women who had learned how to penetrate into the world of nature-spirits, how to become like those spirits, how to influence them and to partake of their powers. In the primitive world-view, nature-spirits and magicians alike "bestow fertility, wealth and strength on whomever they wish, at the same time that they smite their enemies with sickness and death."[23] The notion of the maleficent magician, or witch, arose from that of the "magical transfer." Witches used magic to procure fertility and abundance in their own crops and herds, which implied inflicting a corresponding deprivation on one's neighbours.

THE MAGICIANS formed associations which met secretly, at night, to perform communal rites. By the close of the Middle Ages these associations were being severely persecuted by the Church, for practising a pagan cult. The Cathars were also being persecuted; and it was only natural that the two harassed and outlawed breeds should form an alliance, should indeed amalgamate. Effected in the first instance in the inaccessible valleys of southern France and of the Alps, this alliance or amalgamation gave rise to a new heretical sect, which spread gradually over vast areas of western Europe. This is the sect that we meet in the protocols of the witch-trials and the books of the witch-hunting magistrates. For Cathars and magicians alike, under the pressure of persecution, turned to Devil-worship. Traditional magic was transformed:

> The participants in the "sabbath" were no longer made up of primitive people who tried to influence fertility for their own benefit and according to their own conception of nature, but of sensation-mad, degenerated individuals who actually were convinced that they worshipped Satan himself. The incarnated deity of the witches was enacted by adventurers and rogues. . . .

In support of his view Runeberg lists a number of similarities between, on the one hand, the accounts of the witches' sabbat and, on the other hand, various peasant rites and beliefs connected with fertility. The large sabbats were commonly supposed to be held at Easter, May Day, Whitsuntide, Midsummer, All Saints' Day, Christmas or Lent. These are also the times for fertility rites. The sabbats were supposed to involve circular dances; these can be compared with the dance around the May-pole. Banqueting and love-making figure in both kinds of ceremony, and

[22] *Cf.* J. B. Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* (Cornell University Press, 1972), pp. 41–2.
[23] A. Runeberg, *Witches, Demons and Fertility Magic*, p. 230.

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so do figures in animal masks. Runeberg points out, too, that the witches' Devil has some very unexpected features: he is often called by a name which is far more appropriate to a wood spirit than to the Devil of Christian demonology. Moreover, at the end of the sabbat the Devil sometimes burns himself up—and this also happens to various puppets representing the corn-spirit or the wood-spirit. All this leads Runeberg to the truly Frazerian conclusion. Popular fertility rites and the secret fertility rites of the witches have one and the same object—to kill the "old" spirit of nature and then to resurrect the same spirit in a new, youthful guise. Through all the deformations resulting from contact with Catharism and from the pressures of ecclesiastical persecution, this original sub-structure can still be discerned.

ON THE FACE OF IT, a plausible argument. Nevertheless, it does not prove the existence of an organised body of witches.

There is simply no evidence that there ever was a secret society of magicians, devoted to fostering or exploiting the fertility of crops or herds. No theological treatise or confessor's guide even hints at such a thing. In his efforts to trace such a society Runeberg turns not to the Middle Ages, when he claims it existed, but to the 16th and 17th centuries; and not to primary sources but to Margaret Murray. In the end the only evidence he can produce turns out to consist of those very same accounts of witches' sabbats that I have just shown to be spurious. And the parallels between fertility rites and sabbats can all be explained without assuming that sabbats ever took place.

A full century before Runeberg, Jacob Grimm established that certain folk beliefs, including beliefs about fertility, entered into the picture of the sabbat. But that proves nothing about the reality of the sabbat. Moreover, some of the features listed by Runeberg have a far more obvious explanation. It is not really surprising that when the Lord of Hell has to vanish, he should do so in flames. And if the times of the year when the large sabbats were supposed to be held were the times for fertility rites, they also coincide with major feasts and saints' days in the calendar of the Church. As witchcraft was imagined as a blasphemous parody of Christianity, it was only to be expected that witches would foregather at times which Christians regarded as particularly sacred. On the other hand, most forms of *maleficium* cannot possibly be explained as Runeberg tries to explain them, in terms of "magical transfer." Witches were supposed to harm their neighbours for the sake of revenge, or out of pure malice, or on the Devil's orders, and only occasionally and incidentally for the purpose of augmenting their own stocks of food.

Psychedelic Sects?

ELLIOT ROSE'S SPRIGHTLY BOOK, *A Razor for a Goat*, was published by the University of Toronto Press in 1962. No fertility cult here. Margaret Murray is sharply criticised, both as historian and anthropologist, while Arno Runeberg is not even mentioned. But Rose is just as certain as they that an organisation of witches existed, and just as ready to explain what it did, and why. He too goes back to prehistoric times.

The famous cave-painting in the cave of the Trois Frères in the French Pyrenees, showing what may be a dancer in animal disguise, with great branching horns, is taken to represent the leader of a sorcerers' society. One wonders whether Rose realised that the picture is reckoned to be some 20,000 years old, for the argument moves at one bound to the arrival of Christianity in Northern Europe. Faced with that event, the society of sorcerers transformed itself into a secret sect, worshipping a god who was represented as half-man, half-animal, and adoring a leader as the god's manifestation. The leader was no longer disguised as a deer but as a goat; and this was interpreted, first by the Church and later by the sectarians themselves, as representing the great adversary of the Christian God, Satan. These sectarians were the witches. They were Devil-worshippers; and their leaders, when they dressed up as goat-like beings, were impersonating the Devil himself.

For Rose the libidinous aspects of the sabbat are all-important: the dancing, the copulation of the leader with his followers and of the followers with one another. They lead him to imagine a cult centring on ecstatic experiences, and especially attractive to women. In this view the witch-cult becomes a successor, in a Christianised Europe, of the Dionysian religion of ancient Greece:

> The dancers are clearly Bacchantes or Maenads, and they are honouring the god who sends their frenzy. . . . They are his servants, inspired by him, submerging their individual wills in the inspiration.

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The "flying ointments" used by the witches were ecstasy-inducing drugs. The leaders of the cult (Rose calls them "horned shamans") possessed the secret knowledge of herbs which temporarily released human beings from the limitations of humanity; they were experts in the concoction of herbal drugs. Once more one feels the *Zeitgeist* at work. Just as Murray's *Witch-Cult* appeared when the vogue of *The Golden Bough* was at its height, so *A Razor for a Goat* was published just as the craze for psychedelic experiments and experiences was building up.

Rose accepts without question the reality of sabbat assemblies both large and small. The fact that the large sabbats were held at fixed times of the year has nothing to do with any fertility cult—it simply means that the witches, like their Greek precursors, "celebrated on great occasions of the year the spiritual energy released by the use of certain herbal drugs." Moreover he thinks that originally the rites themselves probably differed from place to place, standardisation being first achieved in the 13th century. The standardisers were goliards—wandering scholars who, despite their educational qualifications, had failed to find employment in the Church.

Trial by water of a suspected witch.

> I suggest they were able, by virtue of their superior education and of the knowledge they pooled with each other, to gain acceptance by witches as masters of the craft, in several places where the cult held out; and that they may have organized it and welded it into a ramifying secret society. . . . From this time the regular coven with its regular meetings, its constituted officers and its rigid discipline may have come into being; from this time thirteen is taken as the standard number in a cell. . . . Now uniformity became possible, and now itinerant witch-masters carried out their visits of inspection in their allotted circuits and met together to consult on the affairs of the craft and exchange the fruits of their learning and experience. Any practice that had formerly been purely local might now become the custom of the society as a whole. . . .

In the 16th and 17th centuries, under the pressure of persecution, formal organisation will have become still more important; so that in the end the forces of order did indeed find themselves faced with a massive underground organisation of Devil-worshippers.

Rose's book ends with a startling comment. It mentions, as an established fact, that around 1590 the "Grand Coven" of Scotland, controlling "a large and powerful organisation of covens" was headed by the Earl of Bothwell. Now, so far from being an established fact, this is sheer fantasy—and the original begetter of the fantasy was none other than Margaret Murray. Ten pages of *The Witch-Cult* are devoted to arguing that Francis Stewart, Earl of Bothwell, took on the role of Devil in an effort to induce Scottish witches to kill James VI by magical means, and so open the way for him to succeed to the throne. When *The Witch-Cult* first appeared a knowledgeable reviewer commented:

> I cannot agree with Miss Murray's account of the Bothwell episode. I find no evidence for his having been the Devil except her desire to believe it.[24]

And anyone who reads the record of the trial of the alleged witches can only agree. Moreover, if we are to believe that Bothwell was the "Devil", then we must also believe that this great lord made a hundred or so of his male and female followers kiss his behind in the kirk of North Berwick. For that matter we must believe that he accompanied them through the air as they flew over the sea, to sink ships at his command. The accused, after prolonged and agonising torture, said all these things of their Devil; only, they never said that he was the Earl of Bothwell.[25]

CLEARLY THE "CASE" WHICH ROSE USES to clinch his argument was taken not from the original sources but from Murray. It is a revealing slip. Though he wrote his book largely in order to combat some of Murray's more glaring fallacies, he remained under her influence. By her selective use of sources Murray had been able to persuade others as well as herself that there really were covens, in the sense of fixed, local groups of witches. This was indeed one of her most original contributions to the misinterpretation of history.

[24] W. R. Halliday, in *Folk-Lore*, vol. XXXIII (1922), p. 228, note.

[25] Cf., in Pitcairn, *Criminal Trials*, vol. I, part 3, *Newes from Scotland. Declaring the damnable life of Doctor Fian a notable Sorcerer* . . . [1591], p. 216, and especially, in the indictment against Agnes Sampson, pp. 235, 239.

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Rose adopted the idea of the coven without, it would seem, ever recognising its origin or questioning its validity. Like Runeberg, he wrote a better book than *The Witch-Cult*. Like Runeberg, he made ingenious suggestions as to what an organisation of witches might have been like. But when one asks for proofs that an organisation of witches really existed, nothing is forthcoming beyond those sources which Murray had already offered—and which, when examined, turn out to be full of the wildest fantasies.

Facts and Fantasies

LESS READ, PERHAPS, than they used to be, the works of Montague Summers still deserve mention in this context. Both *The History of Witchcraft and Demonology* and *The Geography of Witchcraft* were originally published, in 1926 and 1927 respectively, in the Kegan Paul series "The History of Civilization", edited by that eminent Cambridge personality C. K. Ogden. Both were republished as recently as 1963–5; and some of their basic contentions continue to be taken seriously by some historians down to the present day.

Summers claimed, though with doubtful justification, to be in holy orders. What is certain is that he was a religious fanatic: a Roman Catholic of a kind now almost extinct—obsessed by thoughts of the Devil, perpetually ferreting out Satan's servants whether in past epochs or in the contemporary world; horrified yet at the same time fascinated by tales of Satan-worship, promiscuous orgies, cannibalistic infanticide and the rest. He was also a prolific writer, whose productions included, in addition to the works mentioned above, half-a-dozen editions and translations of witch-hunters' manuals, three books on werewolves and vampires, a book on the Marquis de Sade, and numerous editions of Restoration comedies.

For Summers witches were what the witch-hunters of the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries said they were: members of a conspiracy, organised and controlled by Satan, to bring about the destruction of Christianity and the spiritual and physical ruination of mankind. The confessions given in witchcraft trials and the stories in the manuals and memoirs of witch-hunting magistrates are accepted as true in essentials. "We know," he writes, "that the Continental stories of witch gatherings are with very few exceptions the chronicle of actual fact." And again:

> There persists a congeries of solid proven fact which cannot be ignored, save by the purblind prejudice of the rationalist, and cannot be accounted for save that we recognize that there were and are organizations deliberately, nay even enthusiastically, devoted to the service of evil.[26]

Not that Summers himself wholly denies the claims of rationalism, for he follows Murray in playing down the manifestly impossible features in the accounts of the sabbat. Where a sabbat story can be made to look natural by omitting certain details, he omits them. The physical presence of the Devil at the sabbat is interpreted as Murray interpreted it: men impersonated the Devil (and sure enough one of those men was Francis Stewart, Earl of Bothwell). As for flight through the air, Summers claims that it rarely figures in such accounts—though in fact it is a stock feature. In his basic outlook Summers is utterly opposed to Murray and her disciples. For them witchcraft is a purely human creation. For him it is an extreme manifestation of the unremitting war of Satan against God. But he is just as convinced as they that an organisation of witches existed, and held meetings—and just as unable to produce any credible evidence for that view; or rather, any evidence that remains credible if pursued to its source.

A New Study

THE SCHOOL OF THOUGHT we have been considering is by no means extinct, even among professional historians. On the contrary, it has recently found a new and vigorous exponent in Professor Jeffrey Russell, of the University of California. Professor Russell is a distinguished medievalist who has specialised in the history of religious dissent. His *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*, published by Cornell University Press in 1972, is by far the most learned attempt ever made to show that witchcraft really was an organised, anti-Christian religion. It could well convince many who have not been convinced by any of the works I have mentioned above.

As its title indicates, the book deals not with the great witch-hunt of the 16th and 17th centuries but with its medieval antecedents. More specifically, it aims to show that witchcraft was a cult, indeed a sect, which developed out of medieval heresy:

> The development of medieval witchcraft is closely bound to that of heresy, the struggle for the expres-

[26] M. Summers, *The History of Witchcraft and Demonology* (London, 1926), pp. xi, 4.

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> sion of religious feeling beyond the limits tolerated by the Church.

Like heresy, medieval witchcraft can be understood only if it is studied in the context in which it flourished—the context of a profoundly Christian civilisation. It was a protest against the dominant religion, and this meant that it was also a form of social rebellion. "The witch was a rebel against Church and society at a time when the two were wholly identified." That is why towards the close of the Middle Ages, in a time of economic, political and social crisis, witchcraft increased along with other forms of revolt.[27]

Russell does not, of course, claim that every form of religious dissent, or heresy, contributed to the development of witchcraft. But he does claim that one particular tendency, perhaps even one particular tradition, contributed mightily. The groups which he regards as representative of that tendency or tradition are those which, between the 11th and 15th centuries, in France, Germany and Italy, were accused of worshipping the Devil, holding indiscriminate erotic orgies, killing and eating babies. Russell believes that these accusations were mostly justified. Indeed, he regards these groups as being already, in all essentials, organisations of witches. Writing of the period 1000–1150 he comments:

> Through its connection with heresy, witchcraft in this period witnessed the addition of new elements and the further development and definition of older ones: the sex orgy, the feast, the secret meetings at night in caves, cannibalism, the murder of children, the express renunciation of God and adoration of demons, the desecration of the cross and the sacraments. All these had now become fixed elements in the composition of witchcraft.

Indeed one section, dealing with certain German heretics of the early 13th century, is headed simply "HERETIC WITCHES." By the time of the great witch-hunt new features have appeared, but most of these too are treated as reflecting real practices.

Of course witches did not fly through the air, but witches' sabbats took place, and in very much the form traditionally ascribed to them. Instead of being held in a cave or cellar they were held in the open air. The participants were mostly women; and the proceedings were dominated throughout by a being who was understood to be the Devil. Still addicted to their old practices, blasphemous, promiscuous and cannibalistic, the witches nevertheless devoted much of their attention to their master. They kissed his behind and, being mostly women, copulated with him. Russell considers that "the stirrings of feminine discontent" may have contributed to "the orgiastic elements in the witches' revels." But he also notes that copulation with the Devil was not pleasurable. He advances a number of hypotheses in explanation of this paradox; one being that "we cannot suppose that . . . a woman submitting sexually to a being she believes to be the Devil can be wholly relaxed."

THE WITCHES of the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries, then, were adherents of the most extreme of all heresies, members of the most nihilistic of all sects. But this heresy and this sect were the products of a Christian society which insisted on religious conformity, and they drew new strength from every drive to enforce that conformity. The Inquisition was largely responsible for the spread of witchcraft, but only because of all institutions it was the one most directly concerned with repressing dissent. In the last analysis medieval Christian civilisation as a whole was responsible.

Yet if that is the main purport of Russell's argument, it is not the whole purport. For, like so many before him, he also believes that witchcraft was partly rooted in folk practices and beliefs connected with fertility. Fully aware of the inadequacies of Margaret Murray's work, he nevertheless takes her central thesis seriously. Like Runeberg, he holds that fertility rites, with dancing, eroticism, banqueting and the rest, were transformed by the pressures of a hostile Christian society into the witches' sabbat. Moreover he considers that "enormous weight" has been lent to Runeberg's view by the researches of the Italian scholar Carlo Ginzburg. As he sees it, Ginzburg's book *I Benandanti* (published in 1966) illustrates how members of a fertility cult were transformed into witches. Up to 1610 a group of peasants in the district of Friuli in northern Italy fought pitched battles at night against "members of the local witch cult." By 1640, after a generation of inquisitorial trials, they were generally regarded, and even regarded themselves, as being Devil-worshipping witches. In Russell's view "no firmer bit of evidence has ever been presented that witchcraft existed."

Such is the case presented in *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* for believing that there really was an

[27] J. B. Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*, pp. 3, 22, 26, 266.

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organisation, indeed, a sect of witches. It is presented with great erudition and persuasiveness—and nevertheless it completely fails to stand up.

TO DEAL FIRST WITH THE MATTER of the fertility cult. The whole argument is based on a misreading of *I Benandanti*. For as described by Ginzburg, the Friuli peasants did not really fight battles with "members of the local witch cult"—they went into cataleptic trances during which they *dreamed* that, mounted on boats and cats, they fought witches. All that happened physically was that they lay motionless in bed, as though dead, for a couple of hours. Ginzburg's researches do not in any way confirm Runeberg's contention that real gatherings of fertility cultists were transformed, by persecution, into witches' sabbats.

That Russell should so misunderstand the purport of Ginzburg's book is itself significant. It points to a methodological confusion which leads him into other, more serious errors.

> What people thought happened is as interesting as what "objectively did happen", and much more certain.

No doubt—but the two things are by no means the same. Thirty or forty years ago great numbers of Germans believed that world affairs were in the hands of the Jews, who in turn were controlled by a secret government known as the Elders of Zion; while great numbers of Russians believed that Soviet society was riddled from top to bottom by followers of Trotsky who were also agents of the "imperialist" powers. In both cases, the prevalence of such beliefs facilitated the destruction of many millions of human beings. The historian's interpretation of those events will differ greatly according to whether he regards the beliefs as having been substantially correct—or, on the contrary, grossly misguided. In the case of the great witch-hunt the situation was more complex than in the modern persecutions; but it is still the historian's task to distinguish between fact and fantasy so far as is humanly possible.

THE TASK IS NOT AS INSUPERABLE as Russell, in certain passages, makes it sound. I have elsewhere stated my own grounds for not accepting the existence of a sect of orgiastic, infanticidal, cannibalistic, Devil-worshipping heretics between the 11th and 15th centuries. Russell himself explicitly states that charges of ritually murdering children and consuming their blood were "absurd" when brought against Jews. Had he included the case of the Fraticelli in his study, he might have concluded, as I did, that similar stereotyped accusations were no more justified when levelled against heretics. My grounds for not accepting even in part the tales of witches' sabbats, as they were retailed from the 15th century onwards, have been made abundantly clear in the course of the present article. In my view, stories which contain manifestly impossible elements ought not to be accepted as evidence for physical events.

There is a further reason why the notion of a secret society of witches cannot be satisfactorily explained by postulating the real existence of such a society. Present-day anthropologists have found very similar notions firmly embedded in the world-views of "primitive" societies in various parts of the world. Bands of destructive witches who kill human beings, especially children; who travel by night by supernatural means; and who foregather in remote spots to devour their victims—these crop up again and again in anthropological literature. But anthropologists are agreed that these bands exist in imagination only. Nobody has ever come across a real society of witches. And that indeed is the nub: from Jarcke and Mone onwards, the tradition we have been considering has suffered from the same defect, of grossly underestimating the capacities of human imagination.

Taken as a whole, that tradition itself forms a curious chapter in the history of ideas. Over a period of a century-and-a-half, the non-existent society of witches has been repeatedly re-interpreted in the light of the intellectual preoccupations of the moment. The theories of Jarcke and Mone were clearly inspired by the current dread of secret societies; that of Michelet, by his enthusiasm for the emancipation of the working classes and of women; those of Murray and Runeberg, by the Frazerian belief that religion originally consisted of fertility cults; those of Rose and Russell, maybe, by the spectacle of the psychedelic and orgiastic experiments of the 1960s.

But it is time to turn to the other traditional explanation of how the stereotype of a sect of witches came into being in medieval Europe.

(A second article will be published in the next number of ENCOUNTER.)

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Column

THEY SAY that people were bored during the election, and that two in six months was altogether too much of a good thing. But for me at least elections still retain something of the excitement of the first one in which I ever participated, which was at the age of 11 in the great Cardiganshire by-election of 1921. A remote Welsh rural constituency for a moment held the fate of Lloyd George and his government in its hands, and the eyes of the entire world were upon it. I cannot have enough of elections, and often wish I were a citizen of the United States, which seems to have elections of various kinds almost every day. What I find boring is not elections themselves but the televised version of them; for me, television is a kind of vampire, sucking all the blood and life out of the electoral process, and leaving only the dry bones behind.

Indeed, I found this last particular election more than usually fascinating because of the seriousness, complexity and difficulty of the issues involved, and most of all perhaps because of the almost insoluble problem of how in the end one ought to cast one's vote. Fortunately, almost at the last moment the matter was decided for me. On the eve of the poll I was walking home, when out of the gathering dusk, thickened by a slight mist from the river, I heard a voice monotonously repeating: "Vote for Peter Walker! Vote for Peter Walker. Peter Walker is against the Common Market! Peter Walker is against the Common Market!"

It was the loud-speaker van of the Labour Candidate in my constituency and, as in a sudden moment of illumination, all my doubts and hesitations were swept away. So crude, so peremptory, so negative an appeal to the most primitive instincts of the electorate disqualified any candidate, it seemed to me, from discharging the duties and responsibilities of a Member of Parliament, and left me no choice except to vote against Mr Walker. Even so, my hand trembled as I marked my ballot paper in the morning; but the memory of that voice in the darkness resolved my doubts, stiffened my sinews, and brought me to the sticking point.

On this occasion, Mr Walker was defeated, but only by the narrowest of margins. I like to think that his eve-of-poll appeal made all the difference. Perhaps when in the distant future the time comes for Mr Walker's obituary to be written, it will be sufficient to inscribe on his tombstone as a compendium of his political beliefs:

He was against the Common Market

PEOPLE LIKE MYSELF, who as long as they have voted at all have voted consistently and almost automatically for the Labour Party, do not easily change their allegiance. But I would hazard the guess, having no opinion poll on the subject to guide me, that last month more people did, both ways, than in any previous election. Nor could anyone be blamed for being confused and perplexed. The prospects before us, if contemplated in a calm moment, are so bleak that no single party can safely be entrusted with our future. Perhaps that is why at the last moment Mr Heath played the card of "National Unity", and it very nearly took the winning trick; but he played it too late, and in any case he was unable to tell us what we should unite about. What was worse, the form of unity he offered us was one which, by their own wish, excluded the trade unions, and this was the kind of unity which nearly everyone, thinking of the winter ahead, wished to avoid like the plague. It might have been quite different if the winter was over.

Mr Heath also suffered from a different kind of handicap. Throughout his political career, his public image has been essentially that of a combative, aggressive character who knows his own mind and is determined to have his own way at all costs. "Tough" and "abrasive" were the adjectives journalists liked to apply to him. Indeed it was for these very qualities that he was elected to the leadership of the Conservative Party; it was felt that he was the kind of man who had the weight of armour to engage in mortal combat with Mr Harold Wilson and come out undamaged. But in this election he chose to emerge as the conciliator and moderator, the man who could reconcile conflicting purposes and interests; and the reversal of roles was too sudden and too much for him.

It was not the implausibility of the change that mattered. We have come to expect our politicians to be men for all seasons. It was quite simply that Mr Heath possesses none of the tricks of the actor, which enable him to play one part just as well as another, however different, and which have become even more essential to the politician since the invention of television. Mr Heath is totally lacking in those arts which are part of an actor's stock in trade: timing, sensing the mood of the audience, convincingly fabricating emotions which he does not have. In the role of the Great Conciliator he was singularly unconvincing, as if Harold Lloyd had been cast as Hamlet.

In any case, the role itself was misconceived. In British politics, policies of "National Unity" are not a successful means of reconciling sharply

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opposed views, such as today divide Conservatives from Socialists or Liberals, or all of them from Nationalists or Ulster Unionists. They succeed only when divisions of opinion have become irrelevant in the face of some simple common purpose, which preferably can be expressed in a minimum number of words whose meaning is clear to everybody, such as *Save the Pound!* or *Down with Hitler!* or *Chamberlain Out!* There is no such issue on which the country, or a large majority of the country, is united at the present time. For *Fight Inflation!* is not yet a slogan which suggests a clear and simple idea to anyone, least of all those who are supposed to know about the subject. There are even large numbers of people, organised in large and powerful unions, who suspect, perhaps rightly, that inflation may be a very good thing for them at the moment, whatever it may cost their neighbours.

MR HEATH, THEREFORE, not only suffered from being a bad actor; he also suffered from having a bad part, and under such circumstances what is remarkable is not that he failed, but that he came so near to success. One doubts very much whether his successor, whoever he may be, will come anywhere so near.

For, after all, in the election Mr Heath was not fighting anything so abstract as Inflation. He was fighting something much more tangible and identifiable, in the person of Mr Harold Wilson, who must now be accounted one of the most formidable personalities ever to appear in British politics. Ducking, crouching, weaving, sidestepping, he is as hard to hit as Muhammad Ali at his best; and to this he adds the killer-instinct of a Jack Dempsey. When Harold attacks he goes for the jugular, unless it is to deliver some devastating blow below the belt, for where he is concerned politics are strictly a no-foul contest, in which nothing is barred. I can think of no politician in Britain who could go three rounds with him, except Ted Heath himself, whose record stands at one victory and two narrow defeats on points.

But to this impressive armoury the Prime Minister also adds other qualities which are no less valuable. He is, for instance, as Mr Heath is not, by nature a conciliator and mediator; no one who was not could hold the Labour Party together as he has done. One might even say he is a trimmer, always a sure guide to success in politics. But he prefers to conceal this under the guise of a man of principle and of dogged, bulldog tenacity. *Fortiter in modo, suaviter in rem* is his motto, and it has served him well. For Mr Wilson has precisely what Mr Heath lacks, all the gifts of the actor to whom any part is easy and welcome. He can be a clown as well as a tragedian, the Man of Destiny as well as the wise elder statesman, the cautious pragmatist as well as the bold revolutionary. There is not a character in his widely assorted Cabinet which he could not play better than the original. During the election, he added one more role to his repertoire, as Team Manager and Coach, who likes the boys and girls to show their paces, himself in the background, smiling, benign, and encouraging. And all these parts he plays to perfection, with an evident enjoyment of his own performance which somehow makes him endearing even when he is most odious. Only rarely does the mask slip, as when Mrs Shirley Williams blurted out that she would leave politics rather than take us out of Europe; and for once we were privileged to see Mr Wilson disconcerted and at a loss. Something had gone wrong with the stage directions. But it was only for a moment and he made a quick recovery. The show must go on; and did.

This is the Protean, Janus-headed, quicksilver character whom Mr Heath's successor will have to contend with. I do not give him much of a chance. But then, it is not so much his enemies as his friends whom Mr Wilson has most to fear; or if friends is the wrong word, his colleagues and associates. And even they are not so much a danger to him as the objective facts of the appalling situation in which he now finds himself, and we with him. For while Mr Wilson has always shown an unsurpassed mastery in handling the personal aspects of complicated and difficult political situations, he has been notably less successful in resolving the concrete social and economic problems in which they have their origin. He is a superb manipulator of personalities. Brute facts seem to resist, even resent, his magic touch.

IT WOULD, OF COURSE, be absurd to discuss the election in purely personal terms, though in some ways nothing could be more personal than British elections. That is part of their charm, and why opinion polls find it so hard to get them right. And there was all the more temptation to view the last election in terms of personalities because the most serious issues facing this country, including of course the European Market, were largely excluded from it. It was as if the election were played out on an artificially restricted stage, on which the protagonists for that reason loomed all the larger.

There was, for instance, the temptation to think that if only Mr Wilson, on the basis of the so-called Social Contract, could persuade the unions to exercise wage restraint, then all would be well; at the very least, we might stay warm through the winter. This was in fact the basis of

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Mr Wilson's campaign, and perhaps the most alluring and deceptive promise which he held out to the electorate was that the election of a Labour government would be followed by a period of "peace and quiet", in which the electorate might go happily about its own business without bothering any further with the dissensions of bickering politicians. I myself have no doubt whatever that this was precisely what the great majority of the electorate wished to hear, and that such a promise, however veiled and vague, did more than anything else to win Mr Wilson his majority.

There is, however, equally no doubt that this is a promise which cannot be fulfilled. Indeed, probably no one except Mr Wilson would have the effrontery to make it. For the truth of the present situation is that Britain at the moment is faced not by one crisis but by two, of which one is domestic and is to a limited degree under our own control; and the second is external and is the result of factors on which we can, on our own, exercise no influence whatever. Of the two crises, the second is by far the most urgent and severe. It faces the bourgeois-capitalist world, to which after all we belong, with the threat of a total collapse of its monetary arrangements, with mass unemployment on a scale not experienced since the Great Depression of 1929–33, and a progressive restriction of its access to the sources of raw materials and energy on which the system depends. What is more, the immediate world crisis is only a pale reflection of the even greater pressures and strains to which the system will in the long run be subjected as a result of the explosive growth of world population and the additional demands this imposes on the natural resources of the planet. Such pressures have already made themselves evident in large areas of Asia and Africa, in which starvation is no longer a threat but a reality, and in all probability a continuing one.

It is a sign of the insular parochialism of British politics today that such problems were not allowed to play any part in the October election. So far as they were, it was in the form of a promise by the Government that within a year we should be offered the choice at the ballot box of retreating even further into Isolationism, and it is significant that no party cared to make of this a vital electoral issue. Perhaps this was due to an underlying feeling that since we can do no more about the world crisis, and its consequences, than (say) Abyssinia or Bangladesh, we might as well not think about it. But if this was so, it was yet another mark of how far we have declined from any aspiration to be a world power, either on our own account or in association with the peoples of Europe, who by now offer us our only chance of exercising any kind of effective control over our own future or the world's.

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TO SUCH PROBLEMS, as to all others, Mr Wilson has one single answer: the Social Contract. This is the euphemism by which he has christened the corrupt bargain he has struck with the General Council of the T.U.C., by which the trade union leaders promise the Government political favours in return for economic benefits to which the Government has committed itself in its electoral manifesto. It is, of course, a gross misuse of words to dignify a bargain of this kind with the title of a "contract", whether social or otherwise. In the first place, neither of the contracting parties have the power to fulfil their commitments. The T.U.C.'s General Council has no power to restrain its members from doing whatever they choose to do; the Government does not have the means to fulfil the commitments entered into in its manifesto. In the second place, there are no sanctions which either party will incur if it fails to fulfil its part of the contract; indeed, any sanctions incurred are likely to be incurred at the expense of other parties which are excluded from the contract. It is not surprising that Mr Len Murray, of the T.U.C., should now have denied that any economic crisis exists, because it is only too evident that the Social Contract provides no means of dealing with one. What we have, according to Mr Murray, is a few local difficulties which can easily be solved with a modicum of good will.

But there is another sense in which Mr Wilson is guilty of a grave misuse of language in speaking of a Social Contract, to which he now refers as if it were some constitutional document, like Magna Carta, hallowed by age and dignified by time, and now sealed by the consent of the electorate. The Social Contract has indeed a long history, but its part has been played in the realm of ideas rather than of facts. An invention of Rousseau's to explain why it is that men are born equal but are everywhere in chains, it rests upon the notion of a General Will which is different from, and superior to, the will of the individuals composing any given society, and as such has the right to demand their obedience and consent. How such a will was to be identified, and where, if at all, it resided, Rousseau was never able to explain satisfactorily. It depended on the nature of the society concerned, and on the individual or individuals who identified themselves with it; and in any case it was doubtful if it would ever emerge in any community too large to be accommodated around the oak tree on the village green.

Of course, Harold Wilson may claim to have succeeded where Jean-Jacques Rousseau failed. The General Will is to be identified with the General Council of the T.U.C. in consultation with the Labour government. Anyone who disagrees with it is, socially speaking, in a state of mortal sin, even though his views may be those of the great majority of his fellow citizens, as expressed at the polls. It is true that, between Rousseau and Mr Wilson, the General Will has rather come down in the world. Saint-Just used it to justify the Paris Terror. Mr Wilson uses it to justify a Westminster deal.

NOT EVERYONE, of course, is convinced by Mr Wilson's excursion into political philosophy, even among the trade unionists. Mr Hugh Scanlon, for one, is not deceived. He knows that there is no such thing as the General Will, and hence no Social Contract, unless in Hobbes's sense of a willing obedience to the will of the stronger, so long as it saves one from the state of nature in which life is nasty, brutish and short. Mr Scanlon is no fool; at the moment he perhaps quite rightly judges that the will of the stronger is represented by the Amalgamated Engineering Union, and other unions; and he intends to see to it that the life of many people may well be nasty and brutish unless they concede his demand for unrestricted wage increases. Mr Joe Gormley, or certainly Mr Mick McGahey, one feels, takes the same view about the National Union of Mineworkers. Is not its will socially superior to, and politically stronger than, that of the great mass of ordinary British citizens who belong to no trade union and who, poor things, could not recognise a General Will if they saw one?

Philosophical errors have a way of coming home to roost when taken as a guide to action. It is a pity that the level of political debate in Britain today has sunk so low that during the election no one cared to call attention to the implications of the Social Contract. As Alan Watkins, the *New Statesman's* political pundit, asked: why bring Rousseau into it, what the hell does a philosopher matter? But Rousseau does matter, even today. I doubt if in any other country in the world today it would be possible to pull the wool over people's eyes by resuscitating Rousseau's errors, and I fear that before his government is over the Prime Minister may find the Social Contract a very awkward and intractable weapon, which can be used just as well against him as for him by anyone who chooses to identify himself with the General Will. But the truly awful thing is that this time Mr Wilson may really believe what he is saying.

R

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Freud & Jewish Marginality

By Stanley Rothman and Phillip Isenberg

"Quite by the way, how comes it that none of the godly ever devised psychoanalysis and one had to wait for a godless Jew?"

SIGMUND FREUD to OSKAR PFISTER, (9 October, 1918)

WHILE HE WAS a student at the *Sperlgymnasium* in Vienna, young Sigmund Freud flirted briefly with radical politics. The flirtation continued into his first years at the University of Vienna, though with decreasing interest, and finally came to an end. During this period of his life, Freud made the acquaintance of a number of other Jewish students who were later to become prominent in socialist politics, including Heinrich Braun and Victor Adler. All of them were, for a time, members of the *Leseverein*, a student organisation committed to "pan-Germanism" and vaguely to socialism, and Braun and Freud were quite close. Later in life Freud recalled that:

> . . . he [Braun] encouraged me in my aversion to school and what was taught there, and aroused a number of revolutionary feelings in me. . . . I admired him, his energetic behaviour, compared him secretly with a lion and was convinced that one day he would fill a leading position in the world.

At this point Freud was contemplating a legal and political career, dedicated to social reform. However, by the time he left the Gymnasium he had changed his mind and had decided to eschew politics for medicine. In both *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) and his *Autobiography* (1925), Freud ascribes his shift in plans to hearing a public reading of an *Essay on Nature*, which at the time was thought to have been written by Goethe. The decision, Freud notes, barred him from politics, for one could not be a doctor and a politician at the same time.

Carl Schorske is somewhat sceptical of the reasons Freud offers for his shift in career plans. As he points out, at least some Jewish radicals—including Abraham Fischoff, a revolutionary of the 1848 generation, with whom Freud partly identified at one time—combined medicine and politics, and Viktor Adler himself was trained as a doctor. Schorske implies that Freud's decision was at least partly based on his feeling that liberal politics in Vienna was all but dead, and that it made more sense to seek professional success. Schorske also suggests that the later development of psychoanalysis by Freud involved an attempt to resolve the dilemmas of the political liberal on the psychological level by attaining inner freedom.[1]

Schorske's explanation is not without merit. After all a reasonably large number of middle-class Jews followed much the same path that Freud did. Alienated from traditional Judaism after their emergence from the ghetto, they were attracted to radical politics while at the university, only to drop their political commitments for professional careers after graduating.

The attraction of radicalism with a pan-German tinge to a generation of Jewish students was not surprising. As Jews in a Christian society they were "marginal men", subject to discrimination and harassment by accident of birth. For those anxious to escape marginality a number of possible paths lay open. Some hoped to convert Judaism into a more acceptable faith by becoming "Reform Jews." Others thought of conversion, often involving an attempt to be more German

[1] Carl Schorske, "Politics and Patricide in Freud's Interpretation of Dreams", *The American Historical Review* (April 1973), pp. 328–347. Schorske's article deals with some of the same material covered in this essay (for example, the Count Thun and "Hollthurn" dreams, discussed below) but comes to quite different conclusions from those we shall develop. Lack of space prevents us from discussing his analysis here. The interested reader can refer to our essay, "Sigmund Freud and the Politics of Marginality", *Central European History*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (March 1974), pp. 58–78.

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than the most rabid nationalists, in an effort to prove that they were not really alien. Still others, a small but influential minority, chose radical (usually Marxist) politics as a means of ending marginality. After all, Marxism denied the reality of ethnic and religious distinctions, and urged that the crucial forces in social life were economic. What better way to end marginality (and at the same time revenge oneself on the larger Christian society) than by adopting a universalistic creed which defined both Judaism and Christianity as epiphenomenal?

IN A SENSE a radical pan-German outlook seemed the best of all possible worlds in Austria of the late 1870s, for it involved identifying oneself with the dominant culture at the same time that one undermined its traditional bases.

By the 1890s, of course, such a solution was no longer possible. "Pan-Germanism" had already taken on an anti-Semitic tinge. For Adler and Braun, as well as many others, then, conversion to Marxism pure and simple seemed the most viable course and, indeed, middle-class Jews in Central Europe flocked to Marxist parties in reasonably large numbers in the late 19th century. It is true that the Zionist solution which was just emerging was still another alternative. One could end marginality by ending the diaspora and creating a political order which was Jewish or at least dominated by Jews. However, for most Central European Jews, Zionism was not yet—nor was it to become until much later—a real possibility.

OUTLINING ALTERNATIVES to felt marginality is somewhat misleading, for the great majority of middle-class Jews settled down in the society of which they were part, committed to family and profession, and living in an uneasy relationship with the dominant culture. When they thought about their condition, they responded with mixed and contradictory emotions, hostile to the dominant culture, wanting to become accepted by it, resenting their Jewishness and yet feeling tied to it by strong bonds. Most, however, were too busy to give the emotional issues involved more than passing attention.

At first blush, then, it would seem that Freud was merely following a natural path, as the ebullience and radicalism of youth gave way to the requirements of making a living and raising a family. For, while Freud remained something of a political liberal, he became relatively apolitical.

And yet, the reality is rather more complex, for Freud did not simply adopt any profession, or become an ordinary doctor. He went on to create a dynamic psychology which, functionally, played a very similar role to Marxism in being subversive of the existing social order. After all, psychoanalysis (like Marxism) is a universalistic doctrine which denies the reality of culture and of cultural differences. In psychoanalysis man is of one species; cultural-moral ideals are no more than defences against basic libidinal impulses. Modern man (*i.e.*, European/Christian man) does not really differ from "primitive man." He is simply engaged in a more complicated, and perhaps more painful, dance around the same totem pole.

It is sometimes hard to recognise the radical implications of psychoanalysis today. In part this reflects certain shifts in Freud's thinking, especially after 1920. More importantly, however, psychoanalysis has become so much a part of the accepted landscape that it is difficult to understand what things were like before. Certainly the willingness with which so many middle-class intellectuals embrace the view that "modern nervousness" (and worse) is the result of the repression induced by the "excessive rationalism" of Western civilisation owes much to the widespread acceptance of basic (albeit distorted) psychoanalytic insights. Some Gurus of the Counter Culture, such as Herbert Marcuse and Norman O. Brown, specifically begin their critiques of Western culture with Freud. However, even where, as with radical elements in the woman's movement, he comes under attack, the assumption that liberation and love will be the byproduct of instinctual freedom finds its source, at least partly, in the revolution in contemporary consciousness which he wrought.

ISAAC DEUTSCHER sums up some aspects of Freud's revolutionary potential in *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays* (1970):

> It is very obvious why Freud belongs to the same intellectual line [as Spinoza and Marx]. . . . The man whom he analyses is not a German or an Englishman, a Russian, or a Jew—he is the universal man in whom the subconscious and the conscious struggle . . . the man whose desires, and cravings, scruples and predicaments are essentially the same no matter to what race, religion or nation he belongs. From their viewpoint the Nazis were right when they coupled Freud's name with that of Marx and burned the books of both.

Psychoanalysis, then, may not have been as directly corrosive of the dominant European culture as was Marxism; but its impact upon the European and American cultural élite has indeed been profound. And this effect has been less noticed than that of Marxism, for, while the latter could be attacked as ideology, the former came clothed in the garments of science. Once psychoanalysis proved clinically valuable, its vocabulary became part of medical practice and

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was widely accepted, despite its "subversive" qualities. Little wonder that Jung eventually broke with what he regarded as a "Jewish psychology" and turned to one which allowed religious myths an autonomous place as representing the inherent wisdom of mankind.

IS IT POSSIBLE, THEN, that some of the motives associated with Freud's discovery of psychoanalysis had their source in the same drives which led other Jews to Marxism, *i.e.*, the desire to end marginality by undermining the bases of the dominant culture? Is this, in fact, the answer to Freud's question to Pfister, quoted at the beginning of this article? There is at least some evidence that it is and that Freud was at least partially motivated by an animus towards the Catholic Church which informed and profoundly influenced his initial discoveries.

Much of the best of the evidence comes from the book which Freud and other commentators have regarded as his greatest contribution, namely *The Interpretation of Dreams*, and perhaps the most direct allusion to his feelings and their relation to his discoveries can be found in his discussion there of what he jokingly called his "Rome neurosis."

For many years Freud had been unable to visit Rome. He had travelled to Italy many times and yet, somehow, Rome eluded him. He dreamt about travelling to the city, thought about it and discussed the problem in his correspondence with his friend Dr Wilhelm Fliess on a number of occasions, with no result. He found it impossible to understand its sources. Then, one day, a solution suggested itself.

> It was on my last journey to Italy, which among other places, took me past Lake Trasimene, that finally—after having seen the Tiber and sadly turned back when I was only fifty miles from Rome—I discovered the way in which my longing for the eternal city had been reinforced by impressions from my youth. I was in the act of making a plan to by-pass Rome next year and travel to Naples, when a sentence occurred to me . . . "Which of the two, it may be debated, walked up and down his study with the greater impatience after he had formed his plan of going to Rome—Winckelmann, the Vice-Principal, or Hannibal, the Commander-in-Chief?" I had actually been following in Hannibal's footsteps. Like him, I had been fated not to see Rome. . . . But Hannibal, whom I had come to resemble in these respects, had been the favourite hero of my later school days. . . . And when in the higher classes I began to understand for the first time what it meant to belong to an alien race . . . the figure of the semitic general rose still higher in my esteem. To my youthful mind Hannibal and Rome symbolised the conflict between the tenacity of Jewry and the organisation of the Catholic church. . . . *Thus the wish to go to Rome had become in my dreamlife a cloak and symbol for a number of other passionate wishes. Their realisation was to be pursued with all the perseverance and singlemindedness of the Carthaginian,* though their fulfilment seemed at the moment just as little favoured by destiny as was Hannibal's lifelong wish to enter Rome. [Italics added]

Freud continues the discussion by tracing his identification with Hannibal to a yet earlier period in his life. He relates an incident in which his father described an anti-Semitic attack upon him to which he had not responded. The ten- or twelve-year-old Freud remembered being rather disappointed at his father's inaction and:

> I contrasted this situation with another which fitted my feelings better: the scene in which Hannibal's father . . . made his boy swear before the household altar to take vengeance upon the Romans. Ever since that time Hannibal had had a place in my phantasies.

It should not come as a surprise, then, that Freud was finally able to enter Rome in triumph (as he felt) just *after* completing *The Interpretation of Dreams*, having overcome the difficulties which at one time he had thought would prevent him from finishing the book. Ernest Jones suggests that Freud's earlier inability to visit Rome had to do with the fact that Rome was regarded as "the mother of cities", and that both his intense desire and inability to visit it reflected unresolved oedipal conflicts. The overcoming of the neurosis then would be related to Freud having worked through some of these conflicts. Without denying the role of Oedipal conflicts, the explanation seems too general to be fully satisfactory, and is belied by Freud's own interpretation. However, Jones adds that Freud's new ability to visit the eternal city might also have had something to do with the idea that "in order to sleep with one's mother one first has to conquer an enemy." This perhaps is the key to tying the two levels of motivation (the personal and the social) together. It does not seem far-fetched to suggest that with the publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud felt that he had weakened if not fully conquered the Catholic Church and had thus had succeeded in doing what his father had feared to do.

Nor did Freud's successful (if symbolic) conquest of Rome lessen his dislike for the Catholic Church. Writing to Fliess upon the occasion of his first visit to Rome, he noted:

> . . . But while I contemplated ancient Rome undisturbed . . . I found I could not freely enjoy the second Rome. I was disturbed by its meaning and being incapable of putting out of my own mind my own misery and all the other misery which I know to exist, I found almost intolerable the lie of salvation of mankind which rears its head so proudly to heaven.

It was in Rome, too, that Freud, some years

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later, put the finishing touches on *Totem and Taboo* (1913), which he always regarded as one of the three most important and satisfying things he had written. The volume ostensibly deals with the origins of religion. Yet it is Christian practice and ritual that are examined in terms of primitive drives and defence mechanisms. The indirect attack on Christian dogma and ritual was no accident. Indeed, Freud saw it as likely to precipitate that final break with Jung which he now ardently desired. At the time he told Abraham that the book would "serve to make a sharp division between us and all Aryan religiosity."

MUCH LATER IN LIFE Freud was loath to publish the far less self-assured *Moses and Monotheism* lest it arouse the ire of the Catholic Church, whose suspicions of psychoanalysis, he noted, were "not without justification." Freud correctly recognised that in discrediting portions of the Jewish heritage he was, at the same time, levelling an indirect attack at Christianity. And, in 1938, while waiting to leave Austria for England, to escape from the Nazis, he wrote to his son Ernst: "It is high time that Ahasuerus came to rest somewhere." He was, of course, identifying with Ahasuerus, the wandering Jew, who was compelled to wander, because he would not allow Christ to rest while the latter was carrying the cross to Calvary. It is difficult to believe that the choice of this allusion was purely accidental.

IT IS QUITE CLEAR that Freud had more than an inkling of the "subversive" quality of psychoanalysis from the very beginning. As his ideas began to develop, he chose to present his initial findings to members of the B'nai B'rith Lodge which he had joined. His own explanation implies that he did so because his discoveries had isolated him and that he was looking for a "circle of men with high ideas who would accept me in friendship despite my temerity." But Freud had yet, at this time, to publicise his ideas widely, and the decision would indicate that his feelings had more to do with the reaction these ideas *might* provoke than any reaction they had provoked. The assumption that a group of respectable middle-class laymen, if they were but Jewish, would not reject him because of such theories, offers at least some clue as to what part of him, at least, thought the ideas represented.

If psychoanalysis served many of the same functions for Freud that Marxism served for other Jews, why did he choose the less direct path in his desire to subvert the dominant culture? Again, *The Interpretation* provides us with a number of clues in Freud's discussion of some of his own dreams.

At least two of the dreams in *The Interpretation* are associated by Freud with "radical" thoughts and feelings. The first and simpler of these took place on the night of July 18–19, most probably in 1898, when Freud was travelling by train over the Südbahn railway line. He was travelling first-class but (as he notes) under very uncomfortable conditions. In his compartment he met a lady and gentleman who appeared to be "very aristocratic" and who treated him, as he felt, with disdain. They, indeed, had a free pass, a favour reserved for "important" persons, and in his dream, Freud notes, he took fearful vengeance on them, although he declines to indicate the nature of that vengeance:

> . . . in my sleep I heard: "*Hollthurn, ten minutes*" *being called out. I, at once thought . . . of a natural history museum—that this was the spot at which valiant men had fought in vain against the superior power of the ruler of their country—yes, the Counter-Reformation in Austria. . . . I was suddenly in another compartment. . . . I was surprised by this,* but I reflected that I MIGHT HAVE CHANGED CARRIAGES WHILE I WAS IN A SLEEPING STATE. *There were several people . . . a row of books were distinctly visible on a shelf on the wall. I saw "The Wealth of Nations" and "Matter and Motion" (by Clerk-Maxwell*[1]*. . . . The man asked his sister about a book. . . . It seemed as though the books were sometimes mine and sometimes theirs.* [Italics and capitalisation in the original]

In his analysis of this dream Alexander Grinsteins notes (as does Freud himself) that it refers back to hostile feelings with regard to Freud's father and his own hopes of achieving a reputation comparable to Clerk-Maxwell and Adam Smith through his own work. Yet, on another level, the rebellion is against the aristocratic couple who represent the dominant Catholic culture. In the first part of the dream (if we may re-interpret it), Freud suggests that direct rebellion against a superior power will lead to defeat as it did for the "heroes" defeated by the Counter-Reformation. He decides then upon another course of action (he changes carriages). After all, Adam Smith and Clerk-Maxwell had contributed more to the weakening of traditional Catholic authority through science than had those who confronted the Church directly. They had done so through the secularising influence of science. So Freud's rebellion and desire for revenge would be expressed in the same way.

THE THEME OF AVOIDING direct confrontation with those in power comes through even more directly in another and more complex dream of Freud's which occurred some weeks later. He

[2] *Sigmund Freud's Dreams* (Wayne State, 1968), p.341.

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had driven down to the West Bahnhof station in Vienna to take the train for a summer holiday at Aussee, and there saw Count Franz Anton Thun, the Prime Minister of Austria. All kinds of "insolent and revolutionary ideas" went through his head. He awoke about three in the morning with a pressing need to urinate, having had a dream in which Thun appeared as one of the major characters. Indeed, Thun was speaking before a crowd of students, one of whom challenged him. Freud was "fired up." Then the scene of the dream shifted;

> *It was as though I was in the Aula [the Ceremonial Hall of the University]; the entrances were cordoned off and we had to escape. I made my way through a series of rooms . . . at last I came to a corridor, in which a housekeeper was sitting . . . I avoided speaking to her, but she evidently thought I had a right to pass. . . . I felt I was being very cunning in thus avoiding inspection at the exit.* [Italics in original]

The scene shifted again as the escape theme continued, and Freud found himself in front of the railway station:

> *. . . this time in the company of an elderly gentleman. I thought of a plan for remaining unrecognised and then saw that this plan had already been put into effect. . . . He appeared to be blind, at all events with one eye, and I handed him a male glass urinal. . . . So I was a sick nurse and had to give him the urinal because he was blind. If the ticket-collector were to see us like that, he would be certain to let us get away without noticing us.* [Italics in original]

As Freud has pointed out, the associations to a dream are a key element in its interpretation, and those to the Count Thun dream were extensive. Freud had the feeling that he had been carried back to the "revolutionary year" of 1848, and he thought of the revolutionary student leader, Adolf Fischof, who (like Freud) was Jewish and had entered the medical profession. The dream also recalled to him scenes from his rebellious student days including one in which he had played a key role in a revolt against an unpopular teacher, and another in which he had verbally attacked Victor Adler at a meeting of the students' club in which both had been members.

He continues by noting that "out of consideration for the 'censorship' " he can not deal with the second episode of the dream in detail, but that he was obviously placing himself in the place of an "exalted personage of those revolutionary times [Adler]." He declines also to deal in great detail with the final episodes of the dream for the same reason, except to suggest that the blind man was obviously his father. His own interpretation of the incident is that it is a belated form of revenge on Freud senior, for an episode which had occurred in his childhood. One evening when he was seven or eight years old he had urinated in his parents' bedroom while they were present, and his father had let fall the words: "The boy will come to nothing." In the dream, Freud suggests, he had merely turned the tables on his father.

Freud adds that the boastings of the dream (*i.e.*, about his being so cunning) will be understood by anyone who will bear in mind the great Rabelais' incomparable account of the life and deeds of Gargantua and his son Pantagruel. In a long footnote to his associations, Freud suggests that the "whole rebellious content of the dream with its . . . derision of the higher authorities, went back to rebellion against my father."

WE MAY ACCEPT THIS as true on one level, and yet as an explanation it seems curiously unsatisfactory. The structure of the dream, for example, is the same as the earlier one. Political confrontation is followed by flight as Freud "cunningly" escapes the censorship. He finally avoids detection by pretending to be a sick nurse to his father. One could easily interpret the dream (and what he conceals out of respect for the censorship) as telling us that a psychology dealing with human culture and society in terms of Oedipal conflicts might permit a revolutionary attack against the establishment to escape unnoticed.

The interpretation is re-enforced by the question of just what Freud (who had just revealed such a sensitive personal experience) might be concealing from the censorship. Here Freud's reference to Rabelais is suggestive. As Grinstein points out, Rabelais used the stories about Gargantua and Pantagruel as a vehicle for satirising many of the institutions and ideologies of his day:

> In his approach Rabelais was a true revolutionary, which fits in with Freud's revolutionary mood of the dream day and his thoughts in connection with the dream.

Indeed Freud's own discussion of the role of the censorship in *The Interpretation* draws heavily upon political analogies. A political writer who has disagreeable truths to tell must often disguise them:

> A writer must beware of the censorship, and on its account he must soften and distort the expression of his opinion. . . . The stricter the censorship, the more far-reaching will be the disguise.

ANOTHER DREAM from *The Interpretation*, although not dealing as directly with revolutionary themes, offers strong support for our interpretation of some of Freud's motives in his choice of profession and the creation of psychoanalysis.

In *The Interpretation* Freud treats it as an example of an "absurd" dream, and he discusses it immediately after analysing a dream ("Goethe's Attack on Herr M"), which had brought forth

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associations about the choice of a profession. In the Goethe dream the attack on Herr M is supposedly contained in Goethe's *Essay on Nature*. Using this datum Freud associates to his Gymnasium days, hearing the essay read, and the career decision mentioned at the beginning of this essay.

FREUD HAS TOLD US that consecutive dreams can shed light on each other with one being centrally concerned with issues which had been only touched on in the other. Given the fact that Herr M in the Goethe dream and Professor M in the Rome dream are (according to Freud) the same person, namely himself, we might expect the two dreams to be related. And given the rather unconvincing remarks by Freud as to the reasons for his choice of profession, we may look to the second for further clues. We need deal only with the first part of the dream which Freud recounts as follows:

> *On account of certain events which had occurred in the city of Rome, it had become necessary to remove the children to safety and this was done. . . . I was sitting on the edge of a fountain and was greatly depressed and almost in tears.* [Italics in original]

In his associations to the dream Freud notes:

> This dream was constructed on a tangle of thoughts provoked by a play which I had seen, called *Das Neue Ghetto* [The New Ghetto]. The Jewish problem, concern about the future of one's children to whom one can not give a country of their own . . . all of this was easily recognisable among relevant dream thoughts.

His tearful condition at the fountain brings forth the phrase "By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept," and he points out that Rome has many beautiful fountains. He neglects to note that the phrase is taken directly from Swinburne's "Super Flumina Babylonis," which compares the destruction of ancient Italy with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile. Swinburne's poem itself is based partly upon the biblical Psalm:

> *By the rivers of Babylon*
> *There we sat down, yea we wept,*
> *When we remembered Zion. . . .*

And the first two stanzas of Swinburne's poem read as follows:

> *By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept,*
> *Remembering thee,*
> *That for ages of agony hast endured, and slept,*
> *And wouldst not see.*
>
> *By the waters of Babylon we stood up and sang,*
> *Considering thee,*
> *That a blast of deliverance in the darkness rang,*
> *To set thee free.*

The dream, then, is not without a Zionist theme. However, another aspect seems at least as important. The play *The New Ghetto* has as its theme the continued precarious state of the Jews even after formal release from the ghetto, and the folly of acting too militantly and directly on social issues in a Christian society. Indeed, at the end, the chief protagonist dies because of his political involvement in a "liberal" cause. Is it stretching our interpretation of the dream too far to see in it the unconscious feeling that a direct attack on the resented forces of the Christian world which had oppressed his people could lead only to self-destruction? Is it not plausible, considering the other evidence we have adduced, to suggest that Freud's decision to move from a political radicalism to psychoanalysis was a decision to pursue the same aim in a more indirect and complex form?

The dream itself begins with the phrase "My Son the Myops." Freud identifies this word as an *ad hoc* form without meaning and suggests that behind it is the idea of the Cyclops. His final conclusion is that this was a self-warning against becoming too one-sided (one-eyed) in supporting some rather far-fetched ideas of his friend Fliess. But surely Freud, who was a good classical scholar, must have known that in classical Greek "Myops" means "gadfly", and that the term was used to characterise Socrates in his questioning of the basic values of Athenian society.

THE DREAM AND ITS ASSOCIATIONS have still further ramifications. The second stanza of the Swinburne poem speaks of the liberation of Zion. The Jewish people historically were first liberated by Moses, and Freud throughout his life was fascinated by Moses. Indeed, several commentators (including Ernest Jones) suggest that Freud identified himself, in part, with the Jewish patriarch, and Freud acknowledged the identification.

On one of his early visits to Rome, Freud became fascinated with Michelangelo's statue of Moses, and he visited it many times. He even wrote an article on it, one of the few which he originally published anonymously. His interpretation of Michelangelo's intentions is revealing. He concludes that Michelangelo meant to portray Moses just after a tremendous (and successful) effort to exercise his self-control for the purposes of a higher mission. Moses, angered by the actions of the Jews, had been tempted to hurl the tablets entrusted to him by God to the ground. However, he stopped himself in time.

According to Freud, Michelangelo was motivated to deal with Moses in this way because the

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statue was meant for the tomb of Julius II. He then notes:

> In the opinion of many, these motives are to be found in the character of the Pope and in Michelangelo's relations with him. Julius II was akin to Michelangelo in this, that he attempted to realise great and mighty ends. . . . He was a man of action and had a definite purpose, which was to unite Italy under Papal supremacy. He desired to bring about single-handed what was not to happen for several centuries . . . and he worked alone . . . with impatience, in the short span of sovereignty allowed him, and used violent means. . . . The artist felt the same violent source of will in himself, and, as the more introspective thinker, may have had a premonition of the failure to which they both were doomed. And so he carved Moses on the Pope's tomb . . . as a warning to himself, thus rising in self-criticism superior to his nature.

Thus, rather than turning to direct action, Freud would control his anger and take the slower but more sure path of science and intellectual activity as a way of breaking down the barriers created by culture.

FINALLY, WE MAY CITE the motto which appears on the title page of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, —"*Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movembo.*" (If I cannot bend the higher powers, I shall stir up Hell.)" The quotation is from Virgil's *Aeneid* and, as Carl Schorske notes, there is at least some evidence that Freud may have associated the use of the motto with Ferdinand Lassalle, who has used it in one of his own books. More importantly, as Schorske also notes, the words are spoken by Juno who summons from Hell a fury in order to prevent the founding of Rome, and to defend the "Semitic" Dido against Aeneas.

THE EMPHASIS which has been placed here upon Freud's marginality should not obscure the fact that other motivations continued to be (or became) important in his life's work. At all times he was, as he recognised, extremely ambitious for success, and later for the success of his creation. Beyond this his feelings about his Jewishness, the solution to the Jewish problem, and his relation to the dominant culture called forth mixed and contradictory emotions at different times and even at the same time. We have mentioned a Zionist theme in the "My Son the Myops" dream, and a number of commentators have pointed to signs that part of Freud desired to end his marginality by some form of assimilation. Suggestive evidence for this can be found in his youthful joining of a Pan-German organisation; in the coupling of Winckelmann (who converted to Catholicism in order to get to Rome) with Hannibal; and in his irrational wish to have Jung become his successor. The evidence suggests strongly that this last desire had much to do with Freud's hopes that, because he was a Christian, Jung's allegiance would win acceptance for psychoanalysis.

Evidence for Freud's identification with his own society and the desire to assimilate to it can also be found in his attitudes during and immediately after World War I. At the outbreak of the War he became extremely agitated and found it difficult to work. He said that "for the first time in thirty years he felt himself to be an Austrian," and added that: "All my libido is given to Austro-Hungary."

In a few weeks this mood had worn off and in suggesting the reasons for the change Freud told his friends a Jewish anecdote. It seems a Jew had resided in Germany for many years and had adopted German manners. However, when he returned home, his old grandfather, by examining his underclothes, discovered that the German part was only a veneer.

The choice of the anecdote is suggestive, and reveals Freud's basic sense of marginality. However, the desire for the identification remained, and continued to colour some of Freud's attitudes. For example, there is little question but that his hatred for Woodrow Wilson was related to his feelings that "the splendid instrument" of the German Army would not have "broken in the hands of German leaders" if they had not so readily believed the "fantastic promises of the American President's Fourteen Points."

The simultaneous presence of all of these elements in Freud's mental life has permitted various commentators to find whatever they wished in Freud's mental life. It seems clear, however, that the universalistic theme was paramount.

IT MIGHT BE WISE, at this point to recapitulate and to offer some caveats to our interpretation of some of the unconscious motives which may have contributed to the discovery of psychoanalysis.

A "godless Jew" developed psychoanalysis because his marginality enabled him to transcend the cultural blinkers imposed by the dominant culture, just as Jews who became part of radical movements could perceive more clearly the oppressive features of the society around them. In neither case, however, was their ability to perceive and attach themselves to doctrines subversive to the dominant culture necessarily based upon the (often self-proclaimed) nobility of character of their idealism. For some at least the motive was partly to end their own margin-

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ality by destroying the categories which defined them as inferior, and partly to gain revenge on Christian society. In this respect psychoanalysis has served some of the same personal needs as Marxism for many Jews. As one might expect, Freud was ambivalent about his "solution" to marginality, and part of him, at times, sought the route of assimilation, just as he sometimes considered a Zionist solution.

Now for the caveats. First, the fact that Freud's thinking included non-rational components does not mean that these operated with more (or less) force in him than in anyone else. (Psycho-biographies, especially partial psycho-biographies, are always open to the danger of being thus misinterpreted.) Indeed we are convinced that Freud was possessed of an extremely strong ego and could see many things more clearly and with less distortion than most other people in his culture. Furthermore, there is no evidence that Freud or Jewish radicals in Vienna in general were uniquely motivated by "resentment." Any honest analysis of conservatives or liberals (Jews and non-Jews) would reveal, we suspect, that their motivations include these primitive elements, albeit in a different form.

Second, from our frequent use of the word "discovery" in dealing with the creation of psychoanalysis, it should be clear that, in our opinion, much of the corpus of classical psychoanalytic theory is "true." In dealing with the motives that may have provided some of the energy for Freud's discoveries, we are not attempting to impugn psychoanalysis itself, any more than we would or could undermine classical mechanics by examining some of the unconscious sources of Newton's creative genius. Nor, incidentally, does an explanation of the thought or actions of Marx or Trotsky in these terms necessarily undermine their analyses.

Third, the analysis may help us understand why a Jew created psychoanalysis. It will not tell us why Sigmund Freud did so when he did. Part of the answer to that question has to be understood in terms of Freud's special genius as well as in terms of his relation to his parents. More importantly it has to be understood in terms of a general discussion of European culture and social structure at the turn of the century, especially that of Austria. In short, a full explanation of the origins of psychoanalysis would have to relate it to the entire process by which the Christian bases of European society have been undermined and gradually replaced by a secular culture of which psychoanalysis and Marxism are creative (as well as destructive) components. It would also have to deal with the development of science in Europe during the 19th century (including, for example, the impact of Darwin).

AS HE DEVELOPED more insight into himself, Freud clearly became increasingly aware of some of the motives that had helped precipitate his discoveries, as well as the general sources of his own early radicalism and that of some of his fellow Jews.

In his *Autobiography* he states, quite candidly, that, as a youth, he never really had any desire to help suffering humanity. And, in responding to a request from the widow of Heinrich Braun for information about her late husband for a biography, he notes (after describing their relationship in the terms quoted earlier):

> Neither the aims nor means of our strivings were very clear to us and I have since come to suspect that his aims were mainly negative.

Freud's relationship with Braun had ended some forty-five years earlier. What could have prompted this re-interpretation of the latter's motives, except further reflections on his own?

Somewhat earlier Freud had hinted at some of the sources of these "negative aims." In his essay on "Some Character Types Met with in Psychoanalytic Work" (1915), Freud discusses the "exception"; the person whose rebelliousness and claims to special favour are justified to himself by some injury suffered for which he can consider himself blameless. Such people, Freud notes, often feel quite justified in injuring others. He refers to Shakespeare's Richard III as a prime example of the type.

In the midst of the discussion Freud notes:

> For reasons which will be easily understood I cannot communicate very much about these and other case histories. Nor do I propose to go into the obvious analogy between deformities of character resulting from protracted sickness in childhood, and the behaviour of whole nations whose past history has been full of suffering.

As Theodore Reik points out, the reference is obviously to Jews.[3]

By this time, of course, Freud had come to feel that human life was inevitably painful and ambiguous. Social conditions encouraged the marginal man to attempt to resolve this ambiguity by projecting his unique problems, as well as those he shared with the rest of mankind, upon the culture which defined him as marginal, and pretending that (for example) his own aggression and anxieties about this aggression would come to an end once the aggressive (evil) others were eliminated. Freud could no longer accept such rationalisations. He had too much insight into his relations with his parents and his own nature to deceive himself into believing that

[3] Theodore Reik, *Jewish Wit* (1962), p.231.

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the pain of everyday life was a function merely of his being a Jew. As Freud's insight into himself grew, so his hostility towards the Catholic Church diminished; and he even came to accept the Dolfuss régime in Austria (in the early 1930s) as probably the best possible alternative under the circumstances. Although never a believer or a real Zionist, he also came to recognise the fact that "many dark emotional powers all the stronger the less they could be expressed in words" tied him to his Jewishness. It is clear that a universalistic solution to the Jewish problem no longer seemed possible to him in the short run, nor, perhaps, even very desirable.

THIS IS NOT TO SAY that Freud ever completely resolved the tensions of his youth. The primitive contradictory elements in our unconscious are never eliminated. As Freud himself came to realise in his later years, greater insight only enables us to deal with them somewhat more effectively by reducing their emotional hold, and permitting a rather more rational examination of their sources.

During this same period psychoanalysis underwent a number of key changes in his hands, induced, in part, by autonomous developments within the discipline itself. In his earliest formulations, Freud had postulated a tension between ego instincts and the libido. For many of his followers, neurosis was seen as merely the result of sexual repression. Therapy was conceived of as a kind of catharsis which would allow for a freer flow of erotic drives. It was felt that cures could be accomplished fairly quickly, and the theory seemed to call for an end to repression or at least a sharp reduction of it as a way of reducing "modern nervousness." It is perhaps no accident that most—although not all—Freudian radicals (and much of the modern Counter-Culture, including certain kinds of "Encounter groups") have drawn their inspiration from this period.

Freud had no place in his early formulations for an aggressive drive, except as a perversion of desires for mastery, and although he did discuss both sadism and masochism, he tended to see them as derived from erotic sources. By the end of World War I (though as with many shifts in Freud's position one can find earlier signs), this emphasis was changing. The postulation of a basic aggressive drive was certainly anti-utopian in its implications, and the recognition that many of his patients' defences (and indeed their egos) were partly unconscious complicated the therapeutic process. In the end Freud came to feel, in *Analysis, Terminable and Interminable* (1937), that the analyst could only hope for modest results from his efforts and that, indeed, at best, the anxiety stemming from our unconscious conflicts could only be reduced. There were no final solutions.

HE WAS NO LONGER QUITE SO SURE that humanity could dispense with religion, even though he personally felt no need for it, and while he continued to believe in social reform, the utopian appeals of the Bolshevik did not impress him. In fact he was convinced that the justification of aggression in terms of some future ideal society was merely irrational projection and that acting on the basis of such projections could have very serious consequences. It is this Freud, the Freud of *Civilisation and Its Discontents* (1930), that is most widely known to the general reader and has added to Freud's reputation of being "a conservative."

IN ANY EVENT Freud lived the last years of his life in rare serenity, despite the Nazi threat and considerable pain from cancer of the jaw, pain which he refused to alleviate by taking drugs lest they inhibit his work. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* he had reported a number of his own in which it is quite clear that he had had some reservations about revealing the truths he had discovered. Perhaps, he had thought, it would be better to let people cling to their illusions. At the time he had brushed these doubts aside, partly, one suspects, because he was convinced that his discoveries would usher in a new and much better world. By the time he wrote *Civilisation and Its Discontents*, however, he was far less sanguine.

Civilisation, he felt, had been created in an attempt to provide security and increase the level of human satisfaction. To a certain extent it had succeeded in doing so, but every gain had brought with it heavy costs; and, civilisation or no, human beings, by virtue of their humanity, would always be faced with the pain which was an inevitable concomitant of their relations with others and the gradual decay of their bodies.

Setting forth the basic dilemmas, then, Freud now refused to take the role of prophet and offer consolation, "for at bottom that is what they are all demanding—the wildest revolutionaries no less passionately than the most virtuous believers." Instead, he accepted life, and finally death, as if (in his words), having completed a long and arduous journey.

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AMERICAN CHRONICLE

Life & Death in the U.S.A.

By Melvin Maddocks

"Mr Barlow, you are afraid of death." —
"No, I assure you."
"It is a natural instinct, Mr Barlow, to shrink from the unknown."
EVELYN WAUGH, **The Loved One** (1948)

EVELYN WAUGH'S novella *The Loved One* seemed to crystallise to malicious perfection the American posture towards death. Or rather, against death, for the posture surely was one of aversion. Death was judged to be an obscenity, and like all obscenities, required its fig leaves. One did not discuss death even at funerals—especially at funerals. One spoke of "passing on" rather than dying. One spoke of the "leave-taking," not the burial. The corpse, or rather, the "loved one," was painted back to health by cosmetic applications that might make a street-walker blush. No matter how horribly or prematurely the "loved one" died, these iron-willed words summed up the subject: "It's for the best"—the signal for a general stampede back to daily life on the part of the graveside survivors because: "He (she) would have wanted it that way."

Who could have predicted 20 years ago that the death-shy American (like the sex-shy American of 50 years ago) would metamorphose from one caricature into the opposite? As recently as 1967 that wise observer of native anxieties, Erik Erikson, listed only one index entry under "Death" in *Youth: Identity and Crisis*—and that referred to Arthur Miller's play, *Death of a Salesman.* Yet today the fear that supposedly dared not speak its name is being discussed by the young, the middle-aged, and the old to the point of obsession.

IF DEATH WAS ONCE DISMISSED as un-American, nothing could be more American than its sudden discovery. Death has grown into a knowledge industry with its own institutions (*e.g.*, the Center for Thanatological Studies, University of Minnesota) and its own press (*e.g.*, see "*Omega*, an international journal for the psychological study of dying, bereavement, suicide, and other lethal behaviors"). The "death course," as it is known, has become a glamorous elective in American college catalogues. A typical undergraduate listing reads:

> "*Death: Events, Ritual, Decision.* Personal/professional/social decisions regarding life and death—abortion, capital punishment, suicide, war."

"Field assignments" are promised but not specified. A typical graduate course listing reads:

> "*Death and Suicide.* Partial death; megadeath; lethality; the psychological autopsy."

Still another breed of specialist has appeared in the world of specialists: the death expert. What exquisitely cruel sport Waugh might have made of the American Association of Suicidology, whose members conducted their annual convention last year at a Texas motel, listening to papers with titles like '*Methodological Problems in the Development of a Post-Hospital Suicide Prediction Scale.*'

Nor has death become merely the latest subdiscipline of scholars. The fascination with death is broad and popular. A "death questionnaire" sponsored by the magazine *Psychology Today* elicited 30,000 responses from readers, as compared to 20,000 for the "sex questionnaire," the previous record-holder. Another general magazine, *Human Behavior,* has instituted a department called "Death." A whole genre has developed that might be dubbed DEATH LIT.; and here is the smallest random sampling of recent titles, with description by author or publisher.

The Art of Dying "introduces a series of mental exercises which help the individual face his own death with a sense of ease instead of panic, fear, or the thought of pain. To accept the death of others that we love as part of the rhythm of life."

Suicide: The Gamble with Death "reveals how such factors as age, sex, race, and alcohol and drug use affect suicide and actual completions"—not to mention correlations with marital status, the state of the economy, and the weather.

Deaths of Man "examines in detail, and from a number of points of view, what the actual dying process is like. Above all, it stresses the ways in which a person may be helped to die *a more appropriate death.*"

The Immortality Factor reports that, "as fantastic as it seems, science is now at the threshold of achieving control over death" and asks: "What does this mean for life on earth as we know it?"

Last Rights: A Case for the Good Death "sets

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forth the belief that every human being should be able to choose the manner of his dying: in dignity."

WHAT DO THESE BOOKS and other DEATH LIT. books share in common? Judged by content, they have the sort of distant-cousin relationship that justifies (but barely) still another reader's packaging service—say, the Thanatology Book Club. The genre even spills across other publishing boundaries. For instance, books about abortion can be grouped as a Women's Liberation Lit. subdivision. Essays on cryogenics—the freeze-now, thaw-later programme of instalment mortality—constitute a kind of science nonfiction. Where DEATH LIT. books do resemble one another is in their approach.

Never has death been treated as so practical a matter. *Do something about it!* is the reflexive cry-from-the-heart. DEATH LIT. books qualify as manuals, handbooks, or the latest in *how-to* guides. (One such self-help text is devoted to How to be a Widow.) Americans have an impulse to politicise—as the modish verb has it—even the most philosophical issue, and death is no exception. At their most ambitious, DEATH LIT. books are manifestos: pamphlets for a movement that already exists or ought to. Death, to be a little crude, has become the radical's newest revolution, the reformer's ultimate civil rights cause.

THE POLITICS OF DEATH might be illustrated by the topics of abortion or suicide. But euthanasia, at the moment, appears to be *the* issue; and as a case study of that peculiarly native phenomenon—hard-sell idealism—euthanasia knows no peer. The Euthanasia Council (25,000 members) supplies "Right-to-Die" educational kits to schools, for children down to the age of 12. With death as with sex (as once with God), the theory is that one cannot indoctrinate too early. A 56-minute film depicting (in colour) the so-called "good death" may be rented for $55.

The tenets of euthanasia are forever being stated and restated, as if for the pleasure of authors listening to the sounds of their own convictions. The most recent rehearsal of the credo was sponsored by the magazine *The Humanist*. The cover of the July–August issue is designed in the shape of a Declaration of Independence scroll, but the redundant heading reads: "*A Plea for Beneficent Euthanasia.*" "We, the undersigned . . ." the familiar rhetoric begins, going on to "appeal to an enlightened public opinion to transcend traditional taboos and to move in the direction of a compassionate view toward needless suffering in dying." The signers endorse not only "passive euthanasia"—*i.e.*, "the withdrawal of extraordinary life-prolonging techniques, such as intravenous feeding and resuscitation." They are also for "active euthanasia"—*i.e.*, "the administration of increasing dosages of drugs (such as morphine) to relieve suffering, until the dosage, of necessity, reaches the lethal stage."

HOW DOES ONE RECOGNISE the precise point at which the "good death" becomes preferable to a "bad life" for this newly defined "loved one": the patient *in extremis*? A professor of Biomedical Ethics at the University of Virginia, Joseph Fletcher, has proposed "Indicators of Humanhood" as the criteria. Fetuses, comatose persons, and those scoring lower than a 40 I.Q. are among the candidates who fail to qualify for "humanhood" on the Fletcher scale.[1] The patient still passing his "humanhood" test but nervous about his grades may or may not be reassured by a Professor Emeritus of Psychology at Western Maryland College, O. Ruth Russell, who is sure that a "comprehensive euthanasia law" would "meet a broad spectrum of needs and provide adequate safeguards for every case." To guarantee himself a "good death," however, the sensible "loved one" is advised to draw up a contract known as the "Living Will," which has proved to be euthanasia's *pièce de résistance* with the public. When *"Dear Abby,"* the Miss Lonelyhearts columnist, printed a description of a "Living Will," 50,000 readers wrote to the Euthanasia Council for copies. Marya Mannes, a novelist and essayist, has published her own "Living Will" with this uncompromising codicil:

> "I do not wish to survive a stroke that impairs my ability to speak or move, nor any accident or disease resulting in vision too impaired to see or read or in total deafness.
>
> "A world without beauty heard or seen is no world for me.
>
> "A life without freedom and movement is no life for me."

ALAS, THE POLITICS OF DEATH, like a lot of American politics, has a tendency to escalate into evangelism. If the dominant notion of the American used to be that death is non-existent, the *idée fixe* of the 1970s threatens to be that death can be beautiful—not merely a controlled disaster (how to say it?)—but a success story.

Consider just the subtopic of dying last-words. A grudging "So be it" might once have been about

[1] Dr Fletcher also seems to have a scale ("Indicators of Subversionhood" perhaps?) for those who oppose him: "I will wager any amount that the Wallaces and Maddoxes, who defended Lieutenant Calley and hail him as a hero, are devout and pious opponents of euthanasia and abortion probably." In fairness to Dr Fletcher, his enemies are quite prepared to call him a neo-Nazi greasing the "slippery slope" to genocide. Understatement is no problem in the Great American Death Debate.

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the most that could be expected. Today serenity is the least that will be condoned; gusto is preferred. "My cup runneth over" may be the most enthusiastic quote recorded so far in DEATH LIT., but who knows what will follow? A scrutiny of texts discloses that death is counted upon to be not only "gentle and easy" but marked by "dignity" and the same sense of "purpose" required of life. One clergyman has declared that dying should be an "adventure." *The Art of Dying* assigns among its exercises for readers: "Write fifty words of wonder about your own death" and ends with the wish: "May you always be surprised by your own dying and living." Death, in fact, ought to be "beautiful," according to the Council for Christian Action of the United Church of Christ. In its policy statement on euthenasia, the Council affirm "Death for an older person should be a beautiful event", arguing "What's more beautiful than . . . the beautiful brightly colored autumn leaves gliding gracefully to the ground?" Dr Walter W. Sackett, Jr., a Florida legislator who sponsored a "*Death with Dignity*" statute, has promised: "Death, like birth, is glorious."

TO THE FAMILIAR American archetypes of the Death Pragmatist (*Do something about it*) and the Death Optimist (*It could be the best thing that ever happened to you*) must be added the Death Existentialist. Conspicuously neither a pragmatist nor an optimist, the Death Existentialist is recruited principally from the native anti-Americans known and feared as The Young. "Melancholy has been a privilege granted to 'solitary eminences,'" Günter Grass once observed. "As a social attitude, however, it has seldom been legalized"—least of all in the United States. There is one exception: American adolescents (who may be as near to "solitary eminences" as the United States can boast) are allowed, indeed expected to be melancholy; and in this particular they seldom let their elders down. There are no pessimists like the children of optimists.

Death and madness (see R. D. Laing) have become the high grounds on which the young stage their great refusal of the "plastic life" and "crazy normalcy" of late 20th-century America. Like volleys they hail down apt quotes from Albert Camus ("A mass death sentence defines the human condition"), Hermann Hesse ("The whole world seemed destroyed and poisoned; there seemed to be no joy, no more innocence, no more love on earth"), and Sylvia Plath ("Dying is an art, like everything else. I do it exceptionally well").

One honours suffering, case by case; one cannot help wondering about *The Sorrows of Werther* as a popular epidemic. According to one of those ubiquitous polls that topics like death give steady employment to, no less than 50 per cent of the students at the University of Maine said they had "considered, threatened, or actually attempted suicide." Has death become the supreme authenticator for a generation that craves more than anything to be authenticated? In his superb black comedy *The Suicide Academy*, the novelist Daniel Stern formulates this logic for "the kind that all their lives would not take yes for an answer"—"I die, therefore I am."

There is even a suspicion that the new preoccupation with death may have originated with the first Nuclear Era children. Edwin Shneidman, director of the Laboratory for the Study of Life-Threatening Behavior at the University of California at Los Angeles, has wondered if "the current generation might not be termed psychological *Hibakusha* [the Japanese word for the "explosion-affected" survivors of Hiroshima]. At the least they are Atomic Bomb Age children." Dr Shneidman provides a collection of statements written by students in his "death courses." at UCLA and Harvard:

> "I think my whole generation has grown up and been tremendously influenced by the imminent threat of death."
>
> "Death is part of my life."
>
> "The constant threat of nuclear war, the arms race, and the continual reminder of this threat on television makes me acutely aware that death could happen at any time."

Apocalypse is the operative word—or is it?

For a case may be submitted that Viet Nam rather than Hiroshima is the historical episode that spells "death" to a '70s American. "Megadeath," a term that seems to spread like a mushroom, conveys a Doomsday sense of quantity, of "body count." But "wasted," the term that came out of Viet Nam, carries an even more terrible message: meaninglessness; the bitter taste of power at its most destructive (and most impotent); first-hand, irrevocable knowledge of the word "defeat."

AMERICA'S YOUTHFULNESS is its oldest tradition, Oscar Wilde remarked—it's been going on for almost 300 years; and it went on for another half-century after Wilde's quip. In Viet Nam did America arrive at last at middle-age? These novel and dismaying sensations were experienced: a sudden faltering of the will, describable as Manifest-Destiny fatigue; an inclination to refer to the "American Dream" in quotes (and with sarcasm), followed by the unheard-of question, "Is it all worth it?"; an unprecedented attack of self-doubt about the purity of one's motives. *America can die*—the American has admitted this heresy to himself for the first time, and the traumatic effect has yet to be fully measured. But one thing is certain. Watergate, double-digit inflation—the catastrophes that have beset

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the United States since Viet Nam—are now read in the perspective of potentially mortal symptoms.

DEATH, THEN, is not an arbitrary topic, confronted by '70s *avant-gardistes* in order to break a conspiracy of silence, "a stink of hypocrisy", as one put it. Death has imposed itself upon the reluctant American with a painfulness, an *actuality* he could not ignore if he wanted to. An historical montage of the past decade or so seems to play through the collective American memory as a sequence of deaths: two Kennedys gunned down; the bodies of three civil rights workers buried in Mississippi; booby-trapped GI corpses in rice paddies; Marilyn Monroe. The Death Pragmatists and Optimists might like to reduce death to a managed event. The Death Existentialists might like to turn it into a trip, a mind-blowing *idea*. But already the subject of death is proving harder to contain than it used to be to overlook. Death is like Moby Dick: once one sticks in the harpoon, the quarry takes the initiative, and the presumed hunter becomes a passenger at the end of the line. Here are a couple of guesses as to where the white whale might tow Americans next.

SCENARIO NO. 1: *The Anti-Death Machine*. Five years ago the brilliant novelist and maverick philosopher Alan Harrington blurted out in a passionate, book-long diatribe, *The Immortalist*, the radical pragmatism, the all-or-nothing optimism that may still—even in post-Viet Nam middle age—be the only truth an American knows in his bones. "Death," Harrington declared flatly, "is an imposition on the human race, and no longer acceptable." (How languid the 19th-century liberalism of euthanasia propaganda sounds by comparison!) The modern soul's final and absolute discontentment with mortality, Harrington submitted, was the malaise behind all the other discontentments of the 1960s: *Angst* and alienation; drugs and this-or-that revolution. "Good death" to Harrington was a contradiction in terms. He stood with Renan ("I find death loathsome, hateful, and senseless") and Herbert Marcuse, who, in a comment on the "strange masochism" of death-welcoming, wrote indignantly: "A brute, biological fact, permeated with pain, horror, and despair, is transformed into an existential privilege."

A new and bizarre little encyclopaedia called *The Best*, half put-on, half serious—the sort of book that could happen only in America—devotes one of its sections to "The Best Way to Stay Alive", summing up: "It may be possible to finesse the whole problem [mortality] by growing whole new bodies, twins identical to the originals save for memory, from the genetic information contained within single cells." Something like this is what Harrington had in mind when he proposed that "an 'Immortality Program' would not be nearly as expensive as the atomic energy and space projects."

The limited objective, the merely reasonable expectation, has never been the American style. Is Harrington—a spaced-out Job, asking his anguished "Why?", then his desperately cocky "Why not?"—voicing what Americans still feel today but are too sophisticated or too tired to say? This scenario predicates that Americans might recover their notorious energy and their fine old touch of native fanaticism to go all-out—to play the Great Gatsby—one more time. "Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us," Scott Fitzgerald wrote of his American Everyman. "It eluded us then, but that's no matter—tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther . . . And one fine morning . . . "—Immortality!

SCENARIO NO. 2: *The Age of Compassion*. If Waugh's Mr Barlow were to return to America today, he would be pressed by a new question. At almost every turn of American life (and now death) a voice modulated to a perfect pitch of consideration asks: "Why must you suffer? Why must anybody suffer? Let me help you to exercise the latest amendment to the Bill of Rights: 'Each man has a natural right to be treated kindly.' "

"Compassion" is replacing "competitiveness" as the American *beau idéal*. In the August issue of *Reader's Digest* Mrs Norman Vincent Peale pronounced *Compassion* together with *Self-Confidence* and *Enthusiasm* to be the qualities Americans most desire in their children. But what exactly is this *caring*, a word that American writers so regularly italicise, as if to make it mean more than it means? Is compassion the descendant of "charity" of *I Corinthians:* 13—a habit of *Imitation of Christ* that post-Christians have inherited in spite of themselves, a matter of half-playing Jesus, half-playing a Good Joe? Is compassion the final proof to an American that he has ceased to be a puritan—has stopped believing at last that suffering and punishment build character?

Compassion, according to Scenario No. 2, will become the one virtue that can make an American feel in the right even when he is in the wrong. And without it, he will feel wrong even if he is right. Certainly compassion will be—if it is not already—the correct, the almost compulsory posture towards death, as diplomatic non-recognition once was. But this will not be death as one used to know it—a business of gasp, rattle, and agony: the enemy himself. This will be death surrounded by adjectives ("good," "dignified," "timely") and

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buried under statistics. This will be death hidden beneath new euphemisms like "terminal living" that seem no improvement over "passing on." This will be death as an abstraction, a mask of itself: as profound an evasion as reticence ever was.

A worthy but negative purpose—*not* to suffer—will become the primary purpose of life. Anger, humour, piety—the emotions that sprang from the heart of the race and once made dying a human experience of an inhumane event—will disappear into a general blandness. Death, if that is possible, will become banal. For compassion is a bureaucrat's emotion finally—duty aspiring to be love. As bureaucracy continues to grow, it will turn death into a social ill, like unemployment. There ought to be a government agency for this sort of death, and there probably will be.

IN FACT, Scenario No. 2 may not be a scenario at all but a work-in-progress. The only obstacle to its fulfilment appears to lie in the answer to the question: How many Savages are left? If Waugh was the supreme commentator on death in the Age of the Great Ignoral, Aldous Huxley, surely, has been its prophet for the Age of Compassion, insisting more than 40 years ago that to discount what is intolerable about dying would mean to discount what is most precious about living. Here is the Controller, Mustapha Mond (talking to that vain, possibly fraudulent, yet curiously appealing romantic known as the Savage in *World*):

"We prefer to do things comfortably."

"But I don't want comfort. I want God, I want poetry. I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin."

"In fact," said Mustapha Mond, "you're claiming the right to be unhappy."

"All right then," said the Savage defiantly, "I'm claiming the right to be unhappy."

"Not to mention the right to grow old and ugly and impotent; the right to have syphilis and cancer; the right to have too little to eat; the right to be lousy; the right to live in constant apprehension of what may happen tomorrow; the right to catch typhoid; the right to be tortured by unspeakable pains of every kind."

There was a long silence.

"I claim them all," said the Savage at last.

Mustapha Mond shrugged his shoulders. "You're welcome," he said.

THE AMERICAN SAVAGE, of course, has been the artist. One may even claim (like Leslie Fiedler in *Love and Death in the American Novel*) that the native Muse is Death. For a sweeping generalisation, how specifically it proves itself! Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology* literally begin in the graveyard. What are the works of America's best playwright (Eugene O'Neill) about, from start to finish, except death? From Hawthorne to Hemingway, from Poe to Faulkner, the grinning skull has been the imprimatur, as it were, of the American author, mocking the lives of the death-evading countrymen he has written about and for.

So the spectre has been at the back of the American mind since the beginning. The veritable babble about death today represents a frantic game of cultural catch-up—the children and grandchildren of Babbitt ready, at last, to learn what their benignly neglected poets could have told them all along. If we are diligent at our overdue homework, we may eventually know (Scenario No. 3?) what Emily Dickinson knew when she wrote:

That short—potential stir
That each can make but once—
That Bustle so illustrious
'Tis almost Consequence—

Is the éclat of Death—
Oh, thou unknown Renown
That not a Beggar would accept
Had he the power to spurn—

But now such merciless accuracy, such bitter intensity—such accustomed "quiet nonchalance of death"—are beyond our final comprehension as readers, to say nothing of our reach as writers. Late starters at a difficult calling, we can just about handle, it seems, the alphabet verses of *The New England Primer*—those elementary stark facts that every Puritan child knew as soon as he learned his *X* and *Y*:

Xerxes the great did die
And so must you and I.

Youth forward slips,
Death soonest nips.

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Alan Brownjohn

Seven Old Men on an Inter-City Train: a Yeatsian Poem

The First. Is that a flood or a lake?
The Second. I saw a lake.
And were there flooding there would not be swans.

The Third. The swans could have come from a lake, with all this rain
A lake could overflow and spawn a flood,
And cast out swans on it.

The Second. Yet I look again,
And see they are not swans but clumps of suds
Engendered by detergent. Had you but looked
You would have seen all their necks were under water.

The Fourth. But it is unimaginable that suds
Should drift in wandering pairs as if designed
To have the look of swans. Now the train has passed,
I speak it with an old man's memory,
Yet say that nearly all of them were in pairs.

The Second. Why should not some base tycoon-man, who desired
The pride of an environmentalist,
Discharge the effluent of his factory
So that, upon a sudden dreaming glance,
It looked like swans?

The Fifth. That would enhance
A desolate, vulgar place, could it but have
Appearances of companionable swans.

The Sixth. The poet Yeats loved real swans on real lakes,
And had a penchant for using them as symbols.

The Third. And Yeats, I have heard tell, wrote of swans on floods.

The Second. But what would Yeats have thought of clumps of suds
Reclining ceremoniously on a foul scene?
To forge his symbols would be difficult.
Yeats was not of an age when factory waste
Was put on show as swans as a P.R. stunt.

The Fourth. But Yeats himself was a bit of an old . . . tycoon,
And symbol swans are just as shadowy
As foam that moves on a twilight flood.

The Sixth. Yet Yeats
Would not have cried the praise of effluent-swans
To sanctify some tycoon's greedy till.
Yeats was—

The Seventh. I think that Crewe is the next stop.

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Seamus Heaney

Belderg

"They just kept turning up
And were thought of as foreign"—
One-eyed and benign
They lie about his house,
Quernstones out of a bog.

To lift the lid of the peat
And find this pupil dreaming
Of neolithic wheat!
When he stripped off blanket bog
The soft-piled centuries

Fell open like a glib:
There were the first plough-marks,
The stone-age fields, the tomb,
Corbelled, turfed and chambered,
Floored with dry turf-coomb.

A landscape fossilised,
Its stone-wall patternings
Repeated before our eyes
In the stone walls of Mayo.
Before I turned to go

He talked about persistence,
A congruence of lives,
How, stubbed and cleared of stones,
His home accrued growth rings
Of iron, flint and bronze.

So I talked of Mossbawn,
A bogland name. "But *moss*?"
He crossed my old home's music
With older strains of Norse.
I told how its foundation

Was mutable as sound
And how I could derive
A forked root from that ground
And make *bawn* an English fort,
A planter's walled-in mound,

Or else find sanctuary
And think of it as Irish,
Persistent if outworn.
"But the Norse ring on your tree?"
I passed through the eye of the quern,

Grist to an ancient mill,
And in my mind's eye saw
A world-tree of balanced stones,
Querns piled like vertebrae,
The marrow crushed to grounds.

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THEATRE

Metaphysical Voids

On Ayckbourn & Nichols—By JOHN WEIGHTMAN

THE THEATRE is such an ancient and well-tried bag of tricks that many, perhaps even most, of the plays put on are not dramatic "works" in the full sense but rather patchworks of theatrical devices, stitched more or less carefully together to provide actors with something to do and audiences with something to occupy their attention during the course of an evening. This is true not only in the case of out-and-out rubbish, such as *Let My People Come* or *The 120 Days of Sodom*, which are at present dishonouring the boards; it is a noticeable tendency even in worthier theatrical enterprises. The true theatre addict, I suppose, does not really mind the absence of a centre or a backbone to the performance. He enjoys this piece of stage business or that directorial effect, without worrying too much about whether or not there is any aesthetic or intellectual line running between them. He laughs here and he sheds a tear there and, provided the stimulus is maintained, he does not ask every time for coherence or a higher meaning.

I myself can adopt such an approach to television. I can watch an indifferent serial or play for the sake of a particular actor or actress, or because of the ingenuity of the costumes or the interior decoration, and if the flickering images lose their interest, they usually cease to be anything at all except a gentle soporific. But in the theatre, where there are real actors and a collective audience, I remain obstinately awake and I need to sense the play as an organic whole working itself out to some conclusion—a conclusion that may not be easily definable even in retrospect, but which can at least be felt as having obscurely satisfied the general sensibility. When the satisfaction is achieved, it is a wonderful sensation; when it fails, I suffer, in varying degrees, from discomfort, distress or even *Angst*, and I am not happy again until I have tried to determine why, or until the experience has had time to fade. This probably shows that I am no true adept of Theatre, and why I incline to irascibility as a critic. But what is a critic, if not an impatient non-producer who demands that other people should provide him continuously with perfect art?

ALL THIS BY WAY OF introduction to the discussion of two mild attacks of *Angst*, caused by authors with whom I feel myself on the whole to be in sympathy. There is something centrally wrong—or so it seems to me—both with Alan Ayckbourn's trilogy, *The Norman Conquests*, an established success at the Globe Theatre, and with Peter Nichols' new play, *The Freeway*, which has recently come on at the National.

Both are very English works and purport to deal with contemporary English manners and customs (although *The Freeway* is set at some unspecified time in the near future, possibly 1984). The first is an unpretentious domestic comedy; the second is clearly meant to convey the Plight of the Nation by means of a major symbol. Mr Ayckbourn starts from technique, and his modest endeavour is to construct an efficient theatrical machine that will not hiccup at any point. Mr Nichols has begun from the idea that we must have a play about the way we live now and has looked round for a method of illustrating the idea with characters and tableaux. As it happens, Mr Ayckbourn succeeds and Mr Nichols fails; but they belong together, as it were, in a middle zone of spiritual emptiness, of British anti-metaphysical dowdiness and whimsy. The theatre, as comment on the contemporary scene, may be in as healthy a state in London as anywhere else, but that is not saying a great deal, if these offerings are representative. Our brow, like our general political morale, is rather low.

MR AYCKBOURN is to be congratulated, however, on having done something which, so far as I know, is quite novel in the theatre. His three plays, *Table Manners*, *Living Together*, and *Round and Round the Garden* are not a trilogy in the usual sense. They are not three consecutive treatments of the same situation or characters, nor do they present a single problem seen from

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three different points of view. They are three fragments of the same play, enacted by the same six characters in different parts of one house. When we have seen all three, we know what *A* and *B* were doing in the sitting-room, while *C, D, E* and *F* were in the dining-room or the garden. The three parts fit together to make a space-time continuum, as one might reconstitute a wooden cube that had been carefully sawn into three complex segments.

This is ingenious, and there is some incidental pleasure to be derived from noticing how neatly the parts dovetail together. But what, aesthetically, is the point? I confess I don't see any; the device is a purely mechanical arrangement, which makes the same play three times as long as it might have been, and since the characters cannot develop—being caught at different points of the same week-end—by the third time round we have got to know them rather too well and can anticipate their quirks. One wonders if it would not have been better to take the more telling bits of each play to make a single work, with a change of locale in each act as in *Absurd Person Singular*. The characters themselves are not on a high enough level to bear such lengthy exposure. I saw the three plays in two days, and it was rather like watching several episodes of a T.V. serial at one sitting. In other words, a technical gimmick takes precedence over content.

THE CONTENT ITSELF is farcical comedy. Norman, a mild version of the feckless, anarchistic, talkative, modern anti-hero, arrives to take away his unmarried sister-in-law, Annie, for a clandestine weekend. Her brother, Reg, and his neurotic wife, Sarah, thinking that Annie is only going for a holiday, appear at the same time to look after the invisible, tyrannical, invalid mother. Annie, bullied by the indignant Sarah, has second thoughts. Sarah sends for Ruth, Norman's wife, to stop the rot. The sextet is completed by Tom, an amiable nitwit, who cannot bring himself to propose to Annie; being a vet, he is hampered by the fact that human beings, unlike animals, do not have specific periods of heat. With the help of these elements, Mr Ayckbourn produces some excellent farcical situations, in particular two disastrous family meals, a comic near-seduction of Sarah by Norman, and a rather subtle drunken episode. In fact, as I think back over the plays, I wonder if I ought not to have a higher opinion of them. There are many amusing touches: for instance, the only person not worried by Norman's philandering is his wife, who treats him as a grown-up baby, and she is the only one of the three women he manages to seduce during the weekend. Norman himself is the sort of disorganised person who dominates others by his obstructiveness; Sarah, the *emmerdeuse*, has some good moments and, as played by the curiously appealing and astringent Penelope Keith, almost steals the show from Norman, played by Tom Courtenay.

What, then, is wrong? In the first place, many of the jokes are brought in incidentally, without being properly fitted to the personalities of the characters who utter them or are the subjects of them (*e.g.* would a commonsensical person like Norman's wife sleep all night on the hearth-rug? She might let herself be seduced there, but would later wash and go to bed). In a superior comedy or farce, the jokes are not strung together like daisies in a daisy-chain, but are related to the theme, which they further imperceptibly. In the second place—and this is more important—the farce or comedy is not about anything in particular, except the nondescript muddle in a lower-middle-class household, which lives from minute to minute in a state of petty tension. Norman's vague desire to poeticise living by subverting the norm is not developed strongly enough to provide a genuine contrast with his humdrum surroundings. In his untidy way, he is hardly less philistine than the other characters, so that the general effect is claustrophobic. Mr Ayckbourn is much more acute than Ben Travers, but his trilogy is not absolutely different in kind from those dim old Aldwych farces, such as *Rookery Nook* and *Turkey Time*, which read so sadly today. In this respect, *The Norman Conquests* marks a regression since *Absurd Person Singular*, which had the redeeming feature of black humour and an Ionesco-like tingle of awareness.

Perhaps all artists, whether believers or not, have to opt symbolically for God or the Devil; it is no good adopting the moderate stance of just being "worried about Jim" in a slightly wry, lower-middle-class fashion; that way lies dullness.

PETER NICHOLS' *The Freeway* brings together a number of contemporary obsessions: the all-invading motor-car, the decline of "natural" living, the negative power of the Trade Unions, the double-talk of politicians and the sensation of disseminated bloody-mindedness. A traffic jam is used, in the manner of the old

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boarding-house or hotel setting, as a device to bring together a number of human types. A first obvious defect is that the cross-section of society is so limited. From an enormous silver house-on-wheels emerges a trio of amiable, elderly lower-class Cockney figures, accompanied by a fourth, a Canadianised ex-Cockney, who sees England in a slightly transatlantic perspective, while a rather battered saloon-car discharges a middle-aged peer and his battle-axe of a mother, both in evening-dress and on their way to some Glyndebourne or other. A few younger people lurk in the background, but since they never say or do anything significant, England is presented as being dominated by the over-50s, if not the over-60s, which is surely not the case even now, and will be still less true in 1984. The actors are first-rate: Irene Handl is at her cuddlesome best as the Cockney Ma, Rachel Kempson is splendidly rasping as the battle-axe, and Graham Cowden excels as the peer straining to cultivate the common touch. But as a bunch they seem hardly more representative of the tensions of modern England than a troupe of sea-side pierrots. Mr Nichols has fallen back on traditional theatrical types, instead of showing the new characterisations.

Then, we are meant to believe that the country is partly in the grip of a neo-Fascist organisation, with its private force of armed rangers, which owns The Freeway, a toll-highway that has superseded the motor-roads. How this organisation operates in conjunction with the elected government, or whether it is an authoritarian organ of the government, is not shown, or I did not understand. I suspect that Mr Nichols has taken the vague hints of authoritarianism in the air and linked them to the hated motor-car to produce the simple contrast: freeway=road to slavery. True in one sense; the paradox of the motor-car is that it makes each individual free in the first instance, and then produces total non-freedom, if all individuals want to avail themselves of their freedom at the same time. In other words, it is a perfect illustration of Existentialist liberty leading to the freeze-up of the practico-inert.

This is a problem which politics will have to solve, but it is not in itself a political problem; it is a pure consequence of technological proliferation. I find it difficult to imagine a neo-Fascist organisation centring on roads or motor-cars. I fancy it would be more likely, in an advanced society, to facilitate traffic movement and to clamp down elsewhere. Why not keep people buzzing from *A* to *B* and from *B* to *A* in the illusory conviction that they are doing something real, are accomplishing a *projet*? Movement could be the opium of the people (as indeed it already is to a large extent). I don't think Mr Nichols has thought out the whole psycho-phenomenological question of the motor-car in an interesting way. I have never owned a car, have never learned to drive, and would vote for any government that proposed a return to the bicycle; but it is a waste of time to be metaphysically naive or flatly negative about the motor-car, which is a poetic object for most people, whether they know this or not. I see from the programme that Mr Nichols himself drives a Peugeot, that is, a car with the decent pudendum of a foreign name. In the play, he hints at the attraction of the car as mobile house, in other words as a means of return to the possibly primitive state of nomadism but makes very little of it.

EQUALLY WEAK is his treatment of the opposition between nature and culture. The Canadianised ex-Cockney has known the independence of the wilds and, when hunger threatens, he gathers mushrooms and blackberries, and shoots a pigeon. At the end, he walks off on his own with a confident smile, as if only he were at home in the "natural" situation created by a suddenly demotorised world. But this is an unjustified and sentimental implication. No "natural" man could survive for long in Britain without recourse to civilisation, although he might manage better for a time in the remoter parts of Canada. But even in Canada, he would not really be "natural", because Man is, by definition, the species which has, even in the most primitive situation, added culture to nature. Robinson Crusoe and Tarzan of the Apes are both highly civilised types, who convey an illusion of naturalness because of the very selective brand of culture they present us with. Man cannot return to nature; he can only choose between varieties of culture. All this has been debated *ad infinitum* since the 18th century, but Mr Nichols seems to go no further than the popular, non-philosophical clichés to achieve his theatrical effects, and therefore they cannot form a compelling pattern. Perhaps we can put it this way: *Joe Egg* and *The National Health* were good, because Nichols has a direct personal perception of physical or medical evil; *The Freeway* fails, because he does not sense with equal clarity the nub of political evil.

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BOOKS & WRITERS

Rights & Wrongs

On Mary Wollstonecraft—By LORNA SAGE

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT'S LIFE was a mess: she was attractive, but singularly graceless; she was plagued with irritable, importunate sensibilities; in practice, in the course of her hasty, uncertain career, she contrived to compromise most of her reasoned arguments about the rights of women. All of this, which one might have suspected before, Claire Tomalin's biography[1] spells out moment by moment, muddle by meddle, with a quiet orderliness that highlights still further her subject's almost indecent lack of poise. For this is not a private life—it contains very few interludes of personal, unhistoric consolidation, very little sense of the richness and complexity of unactive day to day existence. Instead, everything seems motivated, blown up, by the spirit of the age. Mary Wollstonecraft saw the imperatives of her own nature as philosophic necessities; the decorous distinction between private ills and the tyranny of cultural tradition lapsed for her; she justified herself to herself by blaming the moral cowardice and inertia of others, and revelled in the chronic insecurity, and even the wretchedness, of living by abstractions.

The main things she learned in her youth, Claire Tomalin suggests, were a sense of grievance and a sense of rootlessness: her father gradually idled his way through a substantial inheritance, and a series of places to live (not homes to Mary) which corresponded to his diminishing means; her elder brother Ned inherited money from his grandfather. The masculine conspiracy, in other words, was early in evidence, and she was to respond by trying to supplant both father and brother in managing the lives of her younger sisters Eliza and Everina. The trite, but unusually candid passion of her adolescent friendships (with Jane Arden at 14, and Fanny Blood at 16) supplies the keynote. She was already thinking in terms of the opposition between conforming stupidity and individual truth:

> "I have a heart that scorns disguise, and a countenance which will not dissemble. . . . I am a little singular in my thoughts of love and friendship; I must have the first place or none. I own your behaviour is more according to the opinion of the world, but I would break such narrow bounds."

Her "I" somehow manages to sound grander than mere self—as indeed it needed to be to sustain her through the prolonged failure to set up an independent female household. The nearest she came was in 1784 (at 25) when along with Fanny, Eliza and Everina she started a school at Newington Green. "The world", though, loomed large on every side—Eliza had (with Mary's encouragement) left her husband and baby; Fanny was about to leave for Lisbon to be married. Instead of being at the centre of things, Mary found herself on the margin of other people's lives, other people's tragedies. In 1785 she followed Fanny to Lisbon, and arrived to find her dying of consumption and childbirth. The school folded finally the next year, and she made over her still sketchy ideas about re-educating women in her first book, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, before accepting the only role the conventional world seemed to offer, and becoming a governess.

And that might have been that—except for her stubborn refusal to acquire the techniques of servility. Her brief, stormy career in the sprawling, aristocratic Irish household of Lord and Lady Kingsborough brought all her prejudices, aggressions, insecurities bubbling to the surface. The clash between her touchy pride and her employers' casual condescension was total, and irresistibly comic: they treated their governess very well, almost like an equal, and she resented it in every irritable fibre of her being. They were so careless, beautiful and rich that their generosity became an intolerable insult—they could so easily afford it. The poverty of her own life (not just material, but personal and emotional) seems to have become oppressively clear to her as a result of this confrontation; when she returned to London she deliberately sought out her own kind and tried to give *her* world a rival solidity.

[1] *The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft*. By CLAIRE TOMALIN. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £4.75.

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What she found was the motley group of radicals who surrounded Joseph Johnson (who had published her book on education)—dissenters like Anna Barbauld, and Price and Priestley (both of whom she'd met earlier at Newington Green); Blake and Fuseli; the perfectibilitarians Holcroft and Godwin. It was in this company, who all felt themselves in different ways spiritual partakers in the French revolution, that she produced *A Vindication of the Rights of Man* in answer to Burke, and a year later (1792) *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.* She wrote hastily, more a pamphleteer than an author; and her success and notoriety was of the same instant, rather insubstantial kind. She had found a circle, and an audience, but the sexual and emotional hunger of that early letter was still painfully unappeased, and she was falling into a habit of faintly absurd philosophical flirtation that led nowhere. Johnson was perhaps homosexual; Fuseli, for whom she conceived an unappetising theoretic passion, certainly had been, and for good measure was now busy getting married and settling down. She was still on the margins of life—as was made nastily clear when, with awesome naivety and self-centredness, she proposed to Fuseli's wife that she should move in as his soul-mate.

THE INEVITABLE REBUFF was another turning point: she might have retreated into surly spinsterhood—she was thirty-three and a "philosophess", "the assertrix of female rights" as Fuseli maliciously described her (making her sound somehow monstrous, as though the very language was resisting such an innovation). Instead preceded by her reputation she set off alone for revolutionary Paris, where the first divorce laws were shortly to be passed, and where the sorts of experiments in living that seemed impossible in London were (almost) unremarkable. Perhaps she had it in mind to find herself a man. Certainly the alacrity with which she responded to Gilbert Imlay's advances—and her thorough misunderstanding of his character—suggest that she didn't so much fall in love with *him*, as with some lay-figure in her imagination, which the attractive, easy-going American obligingly incarnated. Her pregnancy, her growing insecurity and possessiveness coincided with the Terror, when her Girondin and women's rights friends were guillotined, and the English who had remained in Paris were arrested. Imlay had protected her by registering her as his wife at the American embassy, but it was already clear that he was restless, uncommitted. Mary's attempt to live freely, outside marriage, sustained by emotional and intellectual ties alone, was proving to be a fiction that even her will-power couldn't sustain—and the political tide had turned harshly against

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such freedoms. Back in London (in pursuit of Imlay) she tried every kind of emotional blackmail: a suicide attempt with laudanum produced from him a business commission that sent her (plus baby Fanny and nurse) to Scandinavia; a second attempt in the Thames left her even more morally than physically bedraggled, and produced nothing.

Even Mary Wollstonecraft (who now called herself Mrs Imlay) could not, one would have thought, evade the crushing irony of her position any longer: her preachments about independence, will-power, the essential health of emotional appetites must have haunted and jeered at her. But no. She published *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*, and went and called on William Godwin. Like her, though even more belatedly, he was looking for a sexual partner; neither was the other's first choice, and they knew it, and circled round each other in an ungainly kind of dance, protesting their independence, their sensitivity, their aversion to marriage. Hazlitt said of Godwin, "he resembles an eight day clock that must be wound up long before it can strike", and certainly there was a marked lack of spontaneity in his relationship with Mary; the notes they exchanged (signs themselves of the correspondent's stubborn separateness) document their struggle to have the upper hand, to be the one conferring favours, even on the smallest occasions. "I will do as you please" Godwin writes. "Shall I come to consult you; or will you call on me?" Their marriage (when Mary was three months pregnant) promised to be untidily farcical, for all their mutual respect and occasional awkward tenderness. But then the birth (which Mary in self-confident style expected to be as easy as the first time) went horribly wrong; the placenta wouldn't come away, and had to be bloodily extracted by a doctor and eleven days after the birth of her second daughter, on the tenth of September, 1791 she died of septicaemia, and Godwin more than made up, in his way, for his earlier circumspection, by writing *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.*

Godwin was no more tactful than his wife had been, and the frankness of the *Memoirs* fixed her in the public memory as a scandalous, insensitive woman. The obvious reaction (not obvious to Godwin) was that her life refuted her work—that the muddle of her personal relationships, and her apparently boundless capacity for self-justification made nonsense of the claim that women could cope with civil and legal responsibilities. In *A Vindication* she had more or less denied female sexuality as a motive or a hindrance, and yet that very instinct ruled much of her life, and brought about her death. Claire Tomalin has found a truly chilling quotation from the Reverend Richard Polwhele:

> She had died a death that strongly marked the distinction of the sexes, by pointing out the destiny of women and the diseases to which they were peculiarly liable.

The way "destiny" and "diseases" complement each other in this smug utterance is meant to suggest that passive suffering is woman's role, and that fate (or was it God?) had given an object-lesson in Mrs Godwin's death, a dire warning. Claire Tomalin, as her title suggests, wants us to ponder the point: the book begins with foretastes of its end—Mary's grandmother making "the traditional and sensible marriage. . . . For her it meant a steady series of pregnancies, the deaths of almost all her children and the collapse of her health"; Mary's mother died in 1782, her "whole existence . . . bound up in her femininity"; and for all Mary's twistings and turnings and evasions, she too found herself trapped in the old rhythm of breeding and dying. The book makes one (or made me, at any rate) wince at the irony of this miserable ending; but it doesn't, of course, invite one to conclude that therefore all (feminism) is vanity. Today, Mary Wollstonecraft wouldn't have had to die like that, and she wouldn't have had to live like that either; biological roles no

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ROUTLEDGE

longer have the God-ordained finality Mr Polwhele found so reassuring.

OR SO ONE MIGHT have thought. Certainly, my impression on first reading the book was that Claire Tomalin's main problem about her own tone (which she has solved by an admirable restraint and plainness) consisted in avoiding the impulse to canonise, resisting the temptation to pity (and self-pity, as a woman), and being true to the sheer complexity and muddle of Mary Wollstonecraft's progress. Several of the reviews, however, have rather startlingly revealed that the danger, even now, is not too ready an understanding, or a too-easy transition to myth-making, but quite the reverse: apparently people still find Mrs Tomalin's "anti-heroine" too offensive to contemplate squarely; she still manages to rouse the same furies, and the same spiteful smugness. Richard Cobb in the *Times Literary Supplement*, for instance, accused the author of being much too patient with her silly, parasitic, egotistical subject—only in her dying could he detect any evidence of dignity and fortitude, all the rest was destructive, unnatural, "semi-intellectual" nonsense. And in a milder vein, even Marghanita Laski implied it was a pity that it should have been this woman who first articulated the feminist cause, and did it lasting harm by her humourless enthusiasm, and the sheer ugliness of her life. There seems to be a sort of notion abroad that the woman who first called marriage "legal prostitution" could (and should) have been elegant, stable, unpretentious—instead of messy, divided and erratic.

The obvious answer to this (except that for some mysterious reason it seems impossible to accept) was provided by Mary Hays, a Wollstonecraft disciple.

> Hence the eccentricities of conduct, with which women of superior minds have been accused—the struggles, the despairing though generous struggles, of an ardent spirit, denied scope for its exertions!

Translated out of the language of sensibility, this makes good sense—acting and thinking without the safe support of convention cannot help but be graceless, angular, uncertain; Mary had to support herself, not just materially, but spiritually as well, and it's hardly surprising that her career lacks the dim coherence of her mother's or her grandmother's. Far from refuting her work, as reviewers have suggested, her life was the necessary condition for it—unless one's prepared to believe that moral change and social change happen somehow insensibly, by a process of mere accretion, which seems a superstition as dubious as Mr Polwhele's. Mary believed that social change had to be made, and

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that the making necessarily involved wrecking; the damage she did to her own personality, and to other people (her sister, her Irish pupils, her friends), is not thereby justified—it is simply part of the whole process. She didn't happen to say some sensible and true things by accident; only a rootless, tasteless, undignified woman could then have said them.

"She had no capacity for nuance or irony", as Mrs Tomalin (who does) points out, which means that she continuously offends one by her raw enthusiasms, and her wilful refusal to analyse or criticise herself. But then irony, especially for women (witness Jane Austen), was a way of accommodating oneself to the intolerable, the unjust, the humiliating prospect of living within the decorous limits. That took real courage, but not perhaps the final sacrifice for a woman—the sacrifice of delicacy and good taste. *A Vindication* focuses unerringly on the attitudes by which women tricked themselves into acceptance: the notion that there is a special feminine type of thinking called intuition—"This negligent kind of guesswork . . . the random exertions of a sort of instinctive common sense never brought to the test of reason"; the idea that a taste for domestic details is morally enlarging—"men order their clothes to be made and have done with the subject; women make their own clothes, necessary or ornamental, and are continually talking about them; and their thoughts follow their hands"; the romantic attractions of marital unity, two into one—"The laws respecting women . . . make an absurd unity of a man and his wife; and then, by the easy transition of only considering him as responsible, she is reduced to a mere cypher." That she and Godwin did indeed form "an absurd unit" followed inevitably from her inability to suppress either her intellectual aspirations or her sexual and social needs—both were real, both counted, they couldn't be balanced without subtly denying one or the other.

THE CENTRAL TRADITION of the female novelists in the 19th century, from Jane Austen via Mrs Gaskell to George Eliot, refused to think in such polarities, and tried to put the sense and the sensibility together—though the last two were a good deal more successful in their books than in their lives. And even in the careful, complex texture of the fiction, one detects at moments a hint of bad faith and self-consciousness, as though the writer herself isn't sure that her heroine's life can really be coherent. There's an unremarkable bit of description in *North and South* that always seems to me to epitomise this uneasy awareness: Mrs Gaskell is meaning to say that her heroine's sitting-room expresses the balance of her

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personality, but somehow it comes out a bit wrong—

> Pretty baskets of work stood about in different places; and books, not cared for on account of their binding solely, lay on one table, as if recently put down.

Poor Margaret Hale comes out of this as a very confused woman indeed, consumed with nervousness about what's in good taste and what not, and settling for faintly scruffy books which she's not sure whether to read. Mary Wollstonecraft, as Mrs Tomalin says, always "travelled light"; she probably didn't know how to make a sitting-room sufficiently mindless; her settings like her person, were probably uncompromisingly serious and uninviting. But forced to choose between that tastelessness and Mrs Gaskell's version of taste (which thankfully one is not), one surely has to find the embarrassing bluestocking more plausible.

Claire Tomalin has done her anti-heroine a signal service, in presenting her as a contradictory, infuriating, impossible person. I found myself wishing she had committed herself more about her attitudes towards this fragile Amazon, and said more about how she imagines Mary's mind as working when—for example—she was staging her suicides. But perhaps the book would have been impossible to write once it started to venture into fictional hypotheses. Nor can one see, for that matter, quite what style even of contemporary fiction could accommodate such a character, unless the Gothic. Mrs Tomalin wryly reminds one in her summing up that the daughter who cost Mary her life was to remark years later, concerning her child by Shelley—"Oh God, teach him to think like other people"—and the reviewers have pounced on this with sighs of relief. But Mary Shelley was more interesting than that, and more like her mother: *Frankenstein*, that lurid, rebellious piece of myth-making about the problems of creating a new, shapeless kind of creature, a monster, is the continuation of Mary Wollstonecraft's story.

Marginal Salvations

New Poetry—By DOUGLAS DUNN

SYLVIA PLATH CREATED innovations through which her female epigoni have been able to write about the consciousness of femininity. Erica Jong writes as if aware of the immense debt she owes to Plath, and as if attempting to repay it with nervous, agitated homage. Her poem "The Critics" is dedicated "For everyone who writes about Sylvia Plath including me."

> *There is nothing to say now.*
> *You have filled her grave with your theories,*
> *her eyes with your sights . . .*
> *She is grass you have trod.*
> *She is dust you have blown away . . .*

she writes, in a mood of hagiographical sadness. While the whiff of martyrology is, in any context, an odour more foul than fair, Jong's manic celebration of downtrodden or by-passed sisters (in "Alcestis on the Poetry Circuit", for instance) is at least acceptable as an inflated gesture in a movement of consciousness which is still in a self-conscious "revolutionary" phase.

Although she is deeply committed to femininity and its associated predicaments and experiences as her subjects, there is a more widely human purpose to her poems in *Half-Lives*[1] than simply to present verse adjuncts to Women's Liberation and its fashionable line in sexual overemphasis.

> *Why does life need evidence*
> *Of life?*
> *We disbelieve it*
> *Even as we live.*

Jarrell, of whom the sentiment and language are reminiscent, couldn't have said it better. Her poems have a stridency, an accusatory manner which too often caricatures the moral gestures she makes. They set the teeth on edge in a way which these four Jarrell-like lines don't; in these lines the saddened urgency in what she recognised is merely persuasive. Most of the time her poems attempt to enact something more authoritarian, to put the reader in a moral-poetic vice and achieve, by a sort of verbal torture, desperate agreement with what is being said.

As garrulous as America and twice as fierce, passionate, imaginative, surrealistically candid, colloquial, rushed, Jong's poems have all that engaging moral topicality which tricks the consciousness into an abject approval of what it is being exposed to as much as it convinces of her poems' genuine qualities. Poets like Jong are usually well liked. They give it all away with unswerving hubris, a fresh and turbulent self-confidence, and such an energetic assurance of

[1] *Half-Lives*. By ERICA JONG. Secker & Warburg, £3·00, paper £1·50.

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how right they are, how marvellously free and tortured, that a reader willing to recognise the talent behind it all might end up not so much enjoying the poems as thoroughly dissatisfied with himself or herself.

THE NASTINESS of new truths is what we like in such poets, the appearance of a *Zeitgeist* which, because it is snarling and angry, we declare is the real thing. Poems should come on as strong as they can. There is a danger, however, of such a poet finding it virtually impossible to resist the moral arrogance and cant of attitudes said to be new, of liberations said to be afoot and needed. That does happen in *Half-Lives* (mostly when she is writing about sex and men); but it does appear the exception, more like a failure to maintain originality. In the title poem, she says

> *My business is to always feel*
> *a little like a fool*
> *& speak of it –*

which does help to indicate her reliance on subjective resources more than on closed erotic- or life-ideologies.

At the same time, there is the powerful impression in *Half-Lives* that her entire output rests squarely on the tradition of the crazed exposure of the American ego. I happen to like that, and recognise it as having produced the best things in Berryman, Lowell and Plath. While it can be tiresome and repetitious, ponderous and self-important, or downright sloppy, subjective revelations in the sometimes zany manner of Jong can produce a clownish humour and irreverence of the sort which British practitioners find difficult to bring off. For instance, in a poem called "The Nose", her invention is sparkling—insane, but sparkling; and probably intended as a woman's contemptuous appraisal of men's phallic obsessions. The same subject is sent-up in "On the Air." Again her *performance* is what makes the poem succeed, a high-spirited cruelty inflicted by one gender on the other. Snippets could be quoted; but Jong's method is primarily one of narrative; cumulating bits of invention finally add up to a characteristic poem.

Formal mannerisms are evaded, and the principle of control behind her poems appears to be simply an intuitive sense of knowing how to maintain excitement and pointedness. Her skills lie in the invention of narratives, stories, and situations; her language has fresh American novelty, but her similes—which she uses tirelessly—are jaded in comparison with Plath's. Her language as a whole appears pressured out of the sensuousness it would like to possess by a high-pitched tone—like someone screaming the word "peach."

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What she seeks is to blaze with red-hot intensity; but she spins poems out to a length that a more informed sense of control would not permit. Some of the writing looks positively easy, or feeble. An American poetry-speech takes over instead of language. When I shut my eyes, I get a picture of Jong delivering her nightmare monologues to an electronic mirror surrounded with microphones through which pre-recorded applause is amplified.

In spite of these reservations, Jong's talent is impressive. What I think she does best is making what might be called surreal documentaries, as in "Paper Cut." Eliot, although he was writing of the chances for a poetic drama, called this "a simplification of current life into something rich and strange." By taking a representative American secretary and her dilemma, Jong mythologises present time. The poem is savagely critical.

I have seen the mailroom women like lost letters
frayed around the edges.
I have seen the xerox room men
shuffling in and out among each other
like cards in identical decks.

These lines are ordinary enough; the dehumanised have been, sometimes unhappily, the subjects, or victims, of poets at least since Eliot and Pound, who, in contemplating such matters, dehumanised themselves into the bargain. The lesson has been learned, however, and the decency of such poems now lies in the power with which a poet can invest his hopeless compassion. Randall Jarrell wrote this sort of poem best of all, and it is no disparagement of Jong's poem to say it doesn't reach his standard. Jong, however, ends her poem with her own uniquely grotesque ritual. "I bring you chains of paperclips instead of emeralds", the secretary says, and this sacrificial offering becomes an appalling invitation—

I lay my body out before you on the desk.
I spread my hair amid a maze of rubber stamps.
RUSH. SPECIAL DELIVERY. DO NOT BEND.
I am open—will you lick me like an envelope?
I am bleeding—will you kiss my paper cuts?

Not much more to be said on that subject.

ERICA JONG'S BOOK is longer than most at 127 pages. It follows closely on her *Fruits & Vegetables*, and she published a much-reviewed novel, *Fear of Flying*, earlier this year. So she's prolific, and ambitious. Anne Stevenson is ambitious, too. I warm to anyone who has the cheek to try a book-length poem, which is what *Correspondences*[2] is. A family history, charting American character and decay, it probably owes

[2] *Correspondences*. By ANNE STEVENSON. Oxford University Press, £1.60.

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something to Lowell's *Life Studies*. And, as at least one of the photographs on the cover is of Stevenson herself, I assume the book to be autobiographical, at least in feeling, if not in particulars.

An encapsulated chronicle, *Correspondences* is also an ambiguous act of rejection—ambiguous because the writer appears enthralled by what is being rejected. The Chandler family is distinguished, established, perverse, and trapped in its inheritances of character. Only such established families, or the middle classes as a whole, indulge in such rejections. They have at least the recorded ancestors to hit back at. Stevenson's poem is sunk deep in disaffiliation and a motive *pour épater le bourgeois*, which is the most familiar and least satisfactory side of the poem.

America is seen as a disenchanted "Eden." In 1909, the Chandler house had been the centre of an experiment in "cooperative socialist living." In the 1840s, it had been a "station" on the "underground railway." As the old wealth of the family evaporates, the house is saved by an insurance magnate connected to the family through the marriage of his son. Containing, as it does, an outline simplification of best American impulses overwhelmed by the worst, the poem carries an historical richness and sense of life which, technically, Stevenson's writing serves more or less adequately. For instance, she does "different voices", different styles for her individual "correspondents", ranging from those of hell-fire commercialists to sensitive lady poets, freak-out contemporary sons, and ruined wives. Idiom changes as time moves on. There is a family tree for reference. Excerpted obituaries from newspapers, love letters, letters of advice from upstanding fathers, and so on, add to the documentary purpose.

CORRESPONDENCES has been worked hard at, not only as a poem, but as something to hold the reader's attention; unfortunately, the impression is that the clever writer was conjuring with too many gimmicks, for all the weightiness of her critique of America. "It is America I can't contain", says Kay Boyd, the pivotal character of the poem, and there's enough here to turn that line into bearing the weight of the poem. Kay Boyd asks if the poems can "Do justice to the living, to the dead?" The answer, I think, is No; but whether that's intended or not is uncertain. It would have been a purpose too mighty even for Shakespeare. Yet Kay Boyd's question suggests the angered compassion which is the spirit in which *Correspondences* is written. Though impressive as a sustained work of the imagination, it fails on the level of not providing enough

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detail, enough proof of veracity. It's an attempt to get away with a massive subject in the wrong form.

TRAVELLING UNDER GLASS,[3] which is published with *Correspondences*, gives a better measure of what Anne Stevenson's poems are like. For example, she can write like this,

> *Thick phosphorescence*
> *gathers in the spaces between window*
> *and black window. Something subtle, like a moon,*
> *has been creeping under surfaces,*
> *giving them queer powers of illumination . . . .*

which is mysterious description, and impressive, though, like most contemporary poets, her ability to describe loses, as if in the act of description itself, cadence and rhythm.

Like Erica Jong, Stevenson writes about women. She is more gracious of understanding, less emphatic on weird, overstated sexual topicalities, and, even if less lively, more likely it seems to me to write more convincing truths of femininity.

> *Know this mother by her three smiles.*
> *One grey one drawn over her mouth by frail hooks.*
> *One hurt smile under each eye . . . .*
>
> *Know this mother by the way she says*
> *"darling" with her teeth clenched,*
> *by the fabulous lies she cooks,*

she writes, in "Generations." Jong, who is very strong on food, and mouths, would like that last line. Stevenson is hardly magnanimous here, but her image of the "frail hooks", the movement and sound of her words, the things she says, have an economy of bitterness Jong lacks. Jong would have given us twenty more lines of equally accusative or critical observations. She doesn't know when to stop, go back, and tidy up. There are no such moments of originality beaten down by spontaneity in Stevenson's poems. She can be clumsy, but it's a careful clumsiness, and the same care leads her to her best lines, for instance, the wit, mischief and memorability of

> *. . . ladies who bend to their cellos,*
> *their velvet knees apart*
> *know well there can only be one love*
> *which is never art.*

In "The Dear Ladies of Cincinnati", her imagination takes more into account than the dryness of the old ladies. With that same sense of history she draws from in *Correspondences*, she pays attention to the social responsibility of a poem, not just the moral obligation of "fulfilment", or stupidity, which would have been a temptation Erica Jong would have found difficult to avoid if writing the same poem. The ladies are left,

> *laughing and rocking and talking in their father's language*
> *while the city eats and breathes for them in the distance,*
> *and the river grows ugly in their perpetual service.*

Again, however, ideas and decently comprehensive social attitudes find themselves abandoned to a rhythm inadequate to the task of galvanising them. Stevenson's more or less traditional idea of how a poem should be is weak on the percussive and melodic side. An original musicality is perhaps the rarest phenomenon in poetry at any time. Lyricism appears now more a matter of a few arresting, sigh-inducing phrases in the context of a supporting incident, held together by secondary words more stray than cohering. Metre would bring that back, but only with surrounding associations of obsolete, worn-out practices. From time to time, in Stevenson's poems, half-muffled cadences do almost break through as auditory accompaniment to sense, but not quite, as for instance in "Coming Back to Cambridge":

> *—by Fen Drayton or Dry Drayton,*
> *by the finger pointed aimlessly to Over—*
> *you slip into a skin that lives*
> *perpetually in Cambridge.*

CADENCE OF LANGUAGE is what contemporary poetry most lacks. Ears appear to have been deafened by cheap, ordinary vocabularies which a more alert, less despairing relish in sounds might have resisted, or transcended. There are exceptions; Seamus Heaney, for instance, though he tends to pack sounds into lines in a way that clots them and makes speech less instead of more flowing. "My poems are sound vehicles," Stevie Smith once said. I doubt if there are many contemporary poets who could feel justified in saying that, least of all those associated with poetry for performance. Concentration has been too closely held on selected incidents; the "individual voice" school of advice produces language too implicated in its own ordinary usages to take the magic of less naturally spoken but more surprising cadences with any seriousness; or poets' attentions are directed to pictures, images, and stories, related too much in the terms most obvious to them. In the last case, it is a question of poetic talent; in the other two of obeying the trends. One finds poets so ignorant of free verse they simply don't know where to break a line, and just break it, because—because the line *looked* long enough.

Technique is a subject nibbled at in most reviews. It's a reviewing method which makes it

[3] *Travelling Under Glass*. By ANNE STEVENSON. Oxford University Press, £1.50

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possible to avoid what a poet actually *says*. Because of that there seems to be the impression that technique is talked about too much. Exactly the opposite is true. What is discussed of techniques is almost invariably at such a decayed level of seriousness as to be of no use to a poet willing to learn more of his or her art, or a reader anxious to know just exactly how such and such a poem might have been put together, why it was written in that way and not in another. Most readers may already have resigned themselves to the cant that "it is all up to the individual poet." But isn't the way a contemporary poem is written always of some cultural importance? Very strange people are doing very strange things to poems these days. Can it just be left as "up to them" without a few reasonable inquiries being set in motion?

ANNE STEVENSON and Erica Jong are more interesting than many contemporary poets when it comes down to ways of writing, and their books were reviewed, at least. Carol Rumens's book *A Strange Girl in Bright Colours*[4] (the title, I hope, was editorial) is equally interesting, but doesn't appear to have attracted the reviewers' attention. I'll indulge in responsibility and make up for it. I'll quote Mrs. Jong first—"Beware of the man who praises liberated women; he is planning to quit his job"—and assure myself that's not my game.

Rumens is the sort of poet who can transcend social anger by sheer force of words. Her conscience is unavoidably present; but the more you read her poems, the more her anger is seen to be absorbed by them, not into a level of inefficient gesture, but the better, and, I would argue, the more political level of an artfully profound making. There is still a good deal of innocence in Rumens's writing, the appearance of Sylvia Plath and others being worked through for what she can get out of them. These opening lines of "A Future", for example—

The lights of the estate blink on at dusk
—little well-drilled municipals, one for each

porch.

The line-break "each/porch" caricatures the effective disjunctures Plath invented, or made her own, and the first line is a pale shadow of what Plath could do as a first line—"The wet dawn inks are doing their blue dissolve. . . ." On the

[4] *A Strange Girl in Bright Colours*. By CAROL RUMENS. Quartet, £1.00.

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congratulatory side, however, Rumens's own originality is present, too. "A Future" is extremely effective. Elsewhere in the poem, we get

Though no-one's starving, and the poorest will
receive his little spring

by courtesy of the state and Montessori
—paints and clay, milk and imagination—

the landlord holds the clock's trump card....

"A Future" is from a part of her book called "New Addington", a housing-estate district.

In the ramshackle wood
the stars of anemones go on. How can they
manage such fission, such spillage

of spotless amps on such a ruin?

she writes in "Spring." The "granite tundra" of New Addington is loved and hated in an ambivalent perspective, and her compassion and criticism seldom roar into the sentimentality which such a subject opens easy doors to. "The price-tagged dreams fall to the darkening street", from the end of "A Future", is an indication of what's behind the door.

Other sections of the book are called "Birth", "Concern", "Love", "A Catholic Girlhood", "Politics", "Women's Liberation", a purposeful categorisation which I think betrays the innocence I mentioned earlier. It's as if she sees her poems as too urgent and too subject-covering to be poems, to be "literary." As some of the poems are so obviously poems, I don't think her ill-advised approach matters much. And, if I'm still able to recognise talent when I see it, Carol Rumens will survive her over-long, badly organised first book.

The Virtues of Laughter

Humour & Humorists—By Geoffrey Strickland

"No man", wrote Carlyle, "who has once heartily and wholly laughed can be altogether irretrievably bad." Mr Boston has his doubts, and describes Stalin at a banquet for the heads of the NKVD laughing till he choked at a re-enactment of the execution of Zinoviev. Yet nearly all his other examples of laughter, even the manic-depressive laughter of a Samuel Johnson or a Byron, are admirable and reassuring and the point of view from which he writes is not very different from Carlyle's.[1]

This is an enjoyable book written in a manner close to that of animated conversation between friends. Mr Boston draws easily on a generous store of hilarious situations and remarks and only occasionally kills a joke by trying to explain it or in the excess of his admiration for its perpetrator. His favourite humorists are Rabelais, Sterne, Boswell, Johnson, Sydney Smith, W. C. Fields, Chaplin, the Marx Brothers, Peter de Vries and Jacques Tati (he has himself impersonated Tati in one of Tati's own films), and much of his book consists of excellent quotations given at affectionate length, intriguing pieces of biography and interesting ideas thrown out in passing: for instance, that it was Johnson's fear of the night which made it difficult for him to "check his risibility" at the "blanket of the dark" in *Macbeth*. The main varieties of humour he discusses are the Rabelaisian, the manic-depressive and the anarchic quasi-divine humour typified by the Trickster figure of American-Indian mythology which he finds also in Rabelais's Panurge, the Marx Brothers, Monty Python and Christ.

There is hardly ever a dull moment in the book; yet it is disappointing, all the same, as a contribution to either the history or psychology of humour. Not that it is very clear how seriously Mr Boston sets out in the first place to be a historian. In his preface he refers to the view that humour today is not what it was and that one of its Golden Ages was the early 'sixties; though he then draws the rather lame conclusion that this Golden Age may well resemble others in that it belongs to a period anterior to any point one may choose to consider in time. Jokes and people's attitudes to jokes *have* changed, surely, whether for better or worse, since the 'sixties. This is obvious enough when one talks to students and to give one's own impression of the changes would be useful, if nothing else, for the historical record. When writing of a more distant past, he uses bolder, more categorical terms and concedes that laughter, both as a physiological and a cultural phenomenon, has known its ups and downs. After the appearance of Burton's *Anatomy*

[1] *An Anatomy of Laughter*. By Richard Boston. Collins, £3.25.

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of Melancholy, for example, the advocates and opponents of laughter "moved into separate camps and it became harder for one person to see the case both for and against." It is difficult to believe that things could ever have been quite as simple as that, even in the 17th century; and the further claim that Handel's setting of Milton's *Allegro* ("holding his si-hi-hi-hi-hides") marks the "return of laughter to polite society" sounds more like an exclamation of delight than a statement of fact.

As a psychologist too Mr Boston writes as an enthusiastic amateur, though given the nature of the subject, this is preferable to the would-be precision of many would-be professional students of laughter. He writes with respect and at the same time refreshing scepticism of the various well-known attempts to account for laughter in *all* its forms: those of Hobbes, Bergson and Freud: also Konrad Lorenz's view that laughter corresponds to a strong bond of fellow-feeling among those who laugh and a common aggressiveness towards outsiders. However, his scepticism deserts him in his chapter on the Trickster, whom he sees as the archetypal clown, essentially anarchic and priapic. "Trickster's independent penis may have its counterpart in the objects carried by other tricksters, clowns and fools. . . . Charlie Chaplin's tramp always carries a walking stick, as did W. C. Fields, and as does the Russian clown Popov. Jacques Tati's Monsieur Hulot always has a loosely rolled umbrella, Groucho Marx has an enormous cigar, and Harpo an elongated hooter. . . ." Harpo, no doubt, is pure "unrestrained libido." No woman is safe from him. But Chaplin, even at his most romantic, or W. C. Fields even at his most gallant? It is not even true that M. Hulot always carries a rolled umbrella. In *Les vacances de M. Hulot*, it would have got in the way. He is like Trickster to the extent that he is an anarchic figure, though the fact that this is the last thing he wishes to be is, surely, part of the joy of the film. To claim that he is in any way sexually aggressive as well is to perform the melancholy feat of forgetting his courteous stance and sublime cavortings across the screen.

IT IS AS A MORALIST, however, that Mr Boston is most unsatisfactory and not least of all because of his earnestness. "Whatever form he takes [Trickster] as long as he survives in some shape . . . there is hope for humanity . . ." he writes. "We need laughter just as we need love." And quoting with approval W. H. Auden on Falstaff: "'. . . this untiring devotion to making others laugh becomes a comic image for a love which is absolutely self-giving'." Earnest too describes

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his thoughts on humour at which one can laugh "unashamedly", jokes which depend for their effect on going just a bit too far, and "comic" effects such as the enumeration of the parts of the cranium severed by the monk in *Gargantua* when he smites one of his guards: "the long medical description . . . by going into quite unnecessary detail dehumanises the dead man (thus freeing our sympathies so we can laugh at him). . . ." The Pantagruelism of Rabelais, "our contemporary", is "noble, decent, brave, humane and human. . . ."

IF WE LAUGH AT RABELAIS, it is surely not because of these latter qualities. Nor would it be if we could be certain that Rabelais possessed them. The Gargantua who declares that all men who marry without parental consent should lose their heads, a wish that was to be fulfilled by actual edicts to that effect (see M. A. Screech's *Rabelaisian Marriage*, which Mr Boston dismisses as humourless) is not "our contemporary." The mediaeval ecclesiastical law he despised and the "molecatchers" (or Friar Laurences) are much closer in this respect to the modern view. So too, I find, as far as the love of men and women is concerned, are Chaucer and Boccaccio. Yet it remains true, presumably, that we can only laugh at a situation which we condone, even if guiltily and in spite of ourselves or because of its seeming unreality. And we usually judge, approvingly or disapprovingly, the laughter of others according to what they seem to enjoy: whether, for instance, they are laughing at the victim of an accident in reality or in a funny film. This is why the perennial discussion in which Mr Boston engages, however judiciously, for and against laughter, as distinct from its occasions, seems to me unreal and his attempts to elevate laughter itself into a moral virtue (Falstaff into a saint and Christ into a clown) unlikely by the nature of things to succeed. Our laughter, if it is genuine, is an expression of what we are genuinely capable of feeling, irrespective of whether we laugh. It is often also (and Lorenz may be right in thinking that it is always) convivial: there is a degree of understanding and sympathy even between enemies who find they can share a joke. It would be difficult to maintain seriously that either the genuineness or the conviviality were always admirable or preferable to their opposites. They often are, it is true, but by Mr Boston's standards and those of most of his readers, there might have been a redeeming streak of humanity in Stalin had he been only pretending to laugh at the re-enactment of Zinoviev's execution.

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EAST & WEST

A Bolshevik Reconsidered

The Case of Comrade Bukharin

By Sidney Hook

THE TIDES OF interest in the past often depend on events in the present. The conjunction of the diplomacy of *détente* and the recent fruits of scholarship has brought to the fore issues that were the obsessive concern of Communist political factions a half-century ago. The publication of three massive biographies of Stalin within the space of a year and the first comprehensive political biography of Bukharin together with the world clamour over the revelations of Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* has made the nature, development, and justification of the Russian October Revolution a topical question once more. Almost all considered reviews of these works raise the problem of the relation between the thought of Lenin and Stalin, and of both to the thought of Karl Marx.

Were the Bolsheviks the true heirs of Marx? Was the success of their seizure of power an historical fluke or a rational move under the circumstances? Was the fateful development of the Soviet Union implicit in a situation resulting from the failure of revolutionary movements in Western Europe to materialise, whose expected outbreak was among the premises of the October action? Or was the transformation of a technologically backward, agricultural country into one of the most highly industrialised the consequence not of the historic or economic logic of the situation but chiefly of the genius—evil or not—of a great leader? Must we acknowledge the presence not merely of one event-making personality in history, Lenin, whose heroic and indispensable role in forging and preserving the October Revolution even a doctrinaire Marxist like Trotsky was ultimately compelled to admit, but of two—Stalin as well? However we assess Stalin's personal capacities—whether as a "grey blur" (Sukhanov) that insidiously spread until it absorbed the whole political landscape or as a "marvellous Georgian" but intolerably "rude" party secretary (Lenin), or as "a mediocrity" (Trotsky) fashioned by the bureaucratic machine to serve its interests in the ebb-tide of the revolutionary spirit, or "... a genius, no less so, perhaps, than a Mozart or Einstein ... in his own highly specialised and destructive field ..." (Hingley)—was Stalin Lenin's genuine political disciple, as he always professed, or his nemesis who destroyed his legacy and transformed Lenin's vision into a nightmare?

And regardless of the personal differences between them, the cultural and intellectual disparities, was the terror that Stalin unleashed his own creative improvement on Lenin, or was he applying to a new situation the lessons he learned from his master?

Any one of the three biographies of Stalin referred to (by Robert Tucker, Adam Ulam, and Ronald Hingley) can serve as a point of departure in considering these questions. But the biography of Stalin's most formidable victim (after Trotsky), Nicolai Ivanovitch Bukharin by Professor Stephen F. Cohen[1] seems to me to provide the freshest challenge to those who wish to reconsider the tangled issues. And this for several reasons. First, for those who are not professional students of Soviet and Communist affairs it contains more new information about Bukharin, his rise and fall, than is available in the other studies in the context of a fascinating eminently readable account of the Russian Revolution. Second, it is written with a sympathy and compassion for Bukharin as a human being that transcends the author's political differences with him. The human and personal costs of revolutionary statecraft are never glossed over. Third, and most important, it takes a clear stand on all the basic questions posed above.

According to Cohen it is Bukharin, and not Stalin, who is the true interpreter of Lenin's legacy. Of special significance is the nature of that legacy. It is not to be found in the corpus of Lenin's prolific writings nor in the great deeds of his life work but in the last few articles he penned or dictated as he lay ill and dying. In them and in conversations with Bukharin (who was very close to him after he was stricken) Lenin disclosed his final views of the way to the ultimate socialist goal. Appalled by the growing careerism and bureaucratisation of Soviet society, he reversed the grand strategy that had brought the Communist Party, despite its triumphs, to a despairing

[1] *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution, 1888–1938.* By STEPHEN F. COHEN. Alfred A. Knopf (New York), $15; Wildwood House (London), £4·40.

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impasse. He outlined a way of growing into socialism not by class war, however moderated, between workers and peasants but by class cooperation—not by planned rapid industrialisation but by gradual, balanced growth in which the needs of the consumers, if not central, would always be regarded as important—not by abandoning the New Economic Policy, originally introduced as a breathing spell and which appeared to "infantile Leftists" to be getting out of hand, but by expanding and transforming it. All this was to be accomplished in a spirit of civil peace, without any resort to the "extraordinary measures", a euphemism for brutal coercion, of war communism or to any extra-legal measures. In words more recently current, Lenin had become a partisan of "socialism with a human face."

ABANDONING HIS OWN EARLIER VIEWS about the economics of the transition period, Bukharin became a convert of the revised gospel to which he was emotionally predisposed by his genial, sunny nature. He preached it strongly first against Trotsky and then falteringly against Stalin who slyly used him to destroy Trotsky and then defamed and murdered him. On this reading of the development of the Russian Revolution, both Trotsky and Stalin departed from the position that Lenin embraced with characteristic fervour before he died, and for which Bukharin was martyred.

The linchpin, therefore, of Professor Cohen's fascinating and brilliant interpretation of Bukharin's last stand for his principles and his life is his contention that Lenin himself had experienced a profound change of heart shortly before he died. He rethought his "first principles" not with respect to the socialist ideal of Marx's basic theories but as they bore on the strategy of practice in approaching them. Presumably he was moved to do this by frustration over the conditions of the country—five years after the heaven-storming events of October, by fear of deteriorating developments for the future, and by deep dissatisfaction with the character of the Party he had forged. No longer sanguine about the imminent revolutionary outbursts from the West, he espoused (for the long haul, not for the short run) domestic policies more peaceful, conciliatory and humane than any previously envisaged. In this he carried with him Bukharin, the leading theoretician of the Party, until then noted for his left-leaning tendencies and doctrinal intransigence.

NEEDLESS TO SAY this is a very appealing thesis to those who regard Trotsky as a revolutionary firebrand whose programme would have imperilled the survival of the Soviet Union, and to those who see in Stalin not the legitimate executor of the social and political testament of October but its bloody-handed executioner. It has also recommended itself to some distinguished scholars of Russian history who have no political axe to grind.

Before considering the central issue together with the related question of the responsibility for the role of terror in the Soviet Union, something should be said of the personality of Bukharin as it emerges from Professor Cohen's masterly study. Bukharin seems to have been the most likeable and attractive individual among the Bolshevik leaders, more interested in finding common ground in conflicting positions, much more aware of currents of thought in the non-Marxist world, friendlier to the multi-hued variety of socialists with whom he disagreed (he was the only outstanding Communist whom the Menshevik leaders in exile spoke of without bitterness), and in general much more humane than the dour and morose Stalin, the envious Zinoviev, the intellectually arrogant Trotsky, and the fanatically intolerant but personally modest Lenin. Doctrinally and organisationally, Bukharin was no less a Bolshevik than any of them until Lenin's death. In the turmoil of events, doctrine is more likely to have a greater significance than mere nuances of personality except where we are dealing with a truly forceful personality who can rise above customary doctrine in the name of a higher sanctifying ideology.

Bukharin was not a forceful personality on the plane of Lenin, Trotsky or Stalin. With respect to his subsequent differences with Trotsky and Stalin, a democratic socialist would certainly have preferred his social and political line to triumph rather than theirs. But with all their differences, he still shared more in common with them than any of their political opponents. He was no democrat. He was just as much committed to the fateful dogma that the dictatorship of the proletariat was substantially the dictatorship of the Communist Party as the other leading spokesmen for October. He was an apologist not only for the seizure of power and the forcible dissolution of the Constituent Assembly but for the excesses of war communism. "Civil war," he proclaimed, "lays bare the true physiognomy of society.". . . He justifies "proletarian coercion in all its forms, beginning with shooting and ending with labour conscription", as a method of creating a new communist man. His views on the role of coercion in his *The Economics of the Transition Period* were approved by Lenin with fervour.

Cohen for all his sympathetic approach offers no holding brief for Bukharin. He is scrupulously fair in presenting evidence that can lead to judgments less generous and tempered than his

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own. He cites some gruesome utterances of Bukharin endorsing Bolshevik violence, not only about the necessity of breaking eggs to make an omelette which anticipated Goering's *bon mot* in the 1930s when another type of omelette was being prepared, but of "cracking skulls." He referred to intellectually handicapped persons (*i.e.*, stubbornly resistant to the wisdom of Bolshevik policy) as "humpbacks" and says of them that they "are only cured by death." Cohen hastens to add, however, that "personally, Bukharin had little taste for cracking skulls," which apparently is true. He left that to others. There is some excuse for a surgeon who can't stand the sight of blood lecturing on radical surgery to help his brethren. With the use of terror as a political instrument, the moral case is different. It is arguable that a terrorist who does not offer an apologia for terror but acts on his party's programme as a simple soldier is less culpable than an eloquent apologist for terrorism who hasn't the nerve or guts to pull the trigger himself. He is certainly less dangerous in a world in which ideas and even loaded words have consequences.

WHAT CANNOT BE GAINSAID is Bukharin's personal popularity among his party comrades and non-party intellectuals within the Soviet Union. Lenin was the father-figure of the party and was glorified before he was deified. No significant comparison can be made between them. Lenin's attitude to Bukharin was avuncular; he overlooked a certain softness in him. He was not impressed by Bukharin's erudition. What he regarded as a dialectical weakness in his Marxism was Bukharin's sensitivity to argument and evidence in controversy with opponents. There is no doubt that Bukharin could live more easily with ambiguity than any of his fellows. And *up to a point* he could accept dissent within the party without appealing to administrative measures.

The sticking point for Bukharin was any serious threat to party unity and the danger of a split. Where he believed that the unity of the party was at stake he countenanced stern disciplinary measures against dissenters. At the same time he silently acquiesced in the most outrageous abuses by the party leadership whenever he feared that public opposition would endanger the unity of the party and precipitate a split. This explains why long before the systematic bloodletting began he made no public protest against the cruel and unjust treatment of Trotsky and his followers at the hands of Stalin, the degrading details of which could not have been unfamiliar to him. He made a fetish of party unity in a way that neither Lenin nor Trotsky ever did. Although it was later argued that it was awareness of Hitler's planned crusade against the Soviet Union that produced Bukharin's consuming fear of a party split, his behaviour was no different long before Hitler acceded to power.

The pattern of Bukharin's subsequent behavi-

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our is simply unintelligible without reference to the controlling influence of his fetishism of Party Unity. Why, for example, after characterising Stalin in secret talks with others (whom Stalin had already victimised) as a "Genghis Khan" and "a devil", did Bukharin return from the safety of Western Europe to the Soviet Union? A fierce attack on him in *Pravda* had already signalled his fate. André Malraux reports that at that time Bukharin confided to him his certainty that "now he [Stalin] is going to kill me. . . ." His young wife (in exchange for whose life, it is alleged, he later confessed) was at that time with him abroad. Bukharin could hardly have believed that his other relatives would escape Stalin's "devilish" vindictiveness once he became an official victim.

SINGULARLY UNCONVINCING, therefore, is Professor Cohen's explanation, shared by other eminent scholars, of why Bukharin confessed.

Although he apparently was not tortured, as were some of the other Moscow defendants, he acted out his assigned role to save the lives of his wife and child. Then having agreed to this bargain, he skilfully makes nonsense of his own confession and testimony. By the use of Aesopian language,[2] he refutes the criminal charges against him and indicts Stalin for destroying the party of Lenin.

The implausibility of this interpretation stares us in the face. If Bukharin believed only a fraction to be true of what he said to Kamenenev, Nicolaevsky, Dan and others, why should he have trusted Stalin to fulfil his promise? There is no evidence that the dependents of those who did not confess suffered a worse fate than those who did. The same threats were probably made to all. And if Bukharin really banked on Stalin's or Vyshinsky's promise, why should he then have attempted to deceive them by his testimony? After all, he was dealing with two of the most pathologically suspicious minds in Russia, with individuals who were capable of suspecting a person of being a Trotskyist on the ground that his denunciations of Trotsky *quoted him at too great a length*. Stalin and Vyshinsky may have been "devils": they were no fools. They knew all about Aesopian language. People were being jailed and executed for its use. Their very awareness that they were concocting an elaborate and fantastic hoax, the fabricated details of which had in part been exposed from afar by Trotsky, would have made them extremely distrustful of Aesopian contraband in pre-arranged texts of confession. If the lives of his wife and child meant so much to Bukharin, why would he risk them by a macabre game that would furnish Stalin with a pretext to destroy them? As if Stalin required one!

Nor is it clear that Bukharin was secretly communicating to the world his innocence and Stalin's guilt any more than some of the passages and asides in Karl Radek's confession. Had he acted like Krestinsky, who recanted his confession and then recanted his recantation after the Court in angry confusion adjourned to permit him to be "re-questioned", much more dramatic and effective doubts would have been generated. In a culture in which the alleged "objective consequences" of a person's words or ideas or acts, if considered harmful to the State or Party, regardless of his subjective intentions, were often evidence of a capital crime, Bukharin's confession served Stalin's purpose more than adequately.

> "I plead guilty [Bukharin declared] to the sum total of crimes committed by this counter-revolutionary organisation, irrespective of whether or not I knew of, whether or not I took a direct part in, any particular act."

Cohen maintains that "the second half of this statement makes nonsense of the first." I fail to see this—especially if the emphasis falls on the word "particular." Even by the canons of Western jurisprudence, a person who organised and inspired a group of bank robbers could truthfully say this. One can also participate in a conspiracy without having knowledge of, or participating in, any *particular* actions. The chief principals may not have been informed of them before their occurrence.

ONE CAN ONLY GUESS at why Bukharin said some things and not others. It is to his great moral credit that he refused to plead guilty to the degrading specific charges of treason and attempted murder. He knew that the eyes of the world were on him, and so did Stalin. In a sense had he confessed in a spiritless way to the entire litany of absurd charges, the trial would have appeared even more of an extravaganza than it did. The most rabid of the American apologists for Stalin and the Moscow Trials, like Malcolm Cowley, seized on the facts that the defendants did not confess to everything, and that judgment might therefore be suspended concerning their guilt on these points, as evidence of the authenticity of the confessions of guilt on other points.

WHY, THEN, DID Bukharin confess? Cohen as well as others dismisses as sheer fantasy Arthur Koestler's literary reconstruction of Bukharin's psychology. Despite his hatred of

[2] In the Russian revolutionary tradition, the artful use of words to deceive the Czarist censorship of subversive ideas.

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Stalin, Bukharin confessed out of a desire to perform a last act of loyality and piety to the Party. Although one cannot claim verisimilitude for the details of *Darkness at Noon*, Koestler's imaginative insight into Bukharin's motives seems to me to penetrate more closely to the truth than any other hypothesis. And it is Professor Cohen's impressive scholarship that provides ample evidence for it, although he himself does not recognise the cumulative weight of the facts he cites.

Bukharin confessed for the same reason that he chose to remain publicly silent from the very day he suspected the existence of Stalin's murderous plans against his opponents within the party; for the same reason that led him, after his suspicions were confirmed, to charge the Left-Opposition with complicity in Kirov's assassination; for the same reason that accounts, as we have seen, for his sacrificial return to doom from the comparative safety of Western Europe—to wit, his fetishism of Party Unity, his fear that the Soviet régime would be imperilled by public factional strife in the party hierarchy.

Step by fateful step, Bukharin's fetishism of the Party and the necessity in his own mind of preserving the public appearance of unity, led to his own undoing. In 1926 he pleaded with the Left-Opposition:

> "Hold to your own principles, defend your opinions, speak at party meetings . . . but do not dare form a faction. Argue but after decisions are made, submit! [Why? Because] if we legalise such a faction inside our party, then we legalise another party and . . . in reality . . . slip from the line of the proletarian dictatorship."

Later in the same year, to Stalin's plaudits and admiring comments, he changes his tune. He no longer wants the left to hew to their own principles. He demands repentance:

> "Come before the party with head bowed and say: Forgive us for we have sinned against the spirit and letter and very essence of Leninism. . . . Say it, say it honestly: Trotsky was wrong. . . ."

By November 1928 (despite the evidence that his position had considerable support within the Party and even more outside, as apprehension began to spread among the peasantry), instead of carrying the fight against Stalin to the Party at large and to the country, Bukharin resorts "to the preposterous manoeuvre" (the phrase is Cohen's) of personally drafting the resolution of the Central Committee Plenum concerning "right deviationism"—and this, after Stalin had stigmatised Bukharin as a "rightist." Why?

By January 1933 Bukharin (who was personally friendly with Yagoda) had certainly learned of the excesses of Stalin's enforced collectivisation programme whose horrors surpassed his wildest fears. None the less he repents once more before the Central Committee. He speaks of *his* guilt, not of Stalin's and characterises the stand he took in 1928-9, which events had clearly vindicated, as "absolutely incorrect." Why? Not out of personal fear but once more out of exaggerated concern for "party unity, party discipline"—a refrain that reappears again and again in moments of party crisis. Through thick and thin Bukharin adheres consistently to this principle of Party supremacy even after the Party became the pliant creature of Stalin's will. Although in a position to deploy a not inconsiderable intellectual following, strategically placed in communication and publication centres, Bukharin refuses to do battle. He speaks up only *in camera*, and allows Stalin to keep the struggle confined to the topmost echelons until (as Smilga phrased it) Bukharin could be "strangled behind the back of the party."

Cohen cites the evidence that Bukharin was tempted to speak out, that he was aware of the agonising predicament of risking a party split or abetting by his passivity, Stalin's criminal policies. His courage cannot be impugned; his political leadership and judgment can. Undoubtedly his fetishism of Party Unity was strengthened by the series of crises that consistently seemed to threaten at key junctures the stability of the régime—peasant revolts, famine, Western intervention, Hitler's accession to power, Rationalisation for showing a united face to the enemy, even when it seemed to Bukharin that Stalin's policies were helping the enemy, were easy to find. Cohen at one point expresses the view that after 1925 Bukharin "succumbed to the potential logic of single party philosophy." Perhaps, but temperament in his case played a more decisive role than political logic. In comparable situations neither Lenin nor Trotsky, who subscribed just as much to the logic of a single party philosophy, would have been deterred by it from public opposition come what may. For with unshakable confidence they assumed that where they stood, there stood the true party.

IN THE LONG PERSPECTIVE, more important than Bukharin's tragic fate is the significance of his social and economic programme. It goes without saying that no matter what programme was offered to, or adopted by, the Communist Party after Lenin's death, it would be fathered on him. All the contestants for the succession ransacked his writings for quotations to buttress their positions. Bukharin was not a contestant for power. He undoubtedly believed that his proposals were perfectly compatible with Lenin's final views. None the less it seems to me an historic

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injustice to him to attribute, as Cohen and other scholars do, his conception of "growing into socialism" to Lenin, to underestimate his own contribution in going beyond Lenin in outlining a more moderate and humane view of Soviet development. Natural piety as well as political safety would have prevented him from making any such claim even if he believed this to be true. Just as in the theological disputes of the Middle Ages contenders for the mantle of orthodoxy sought to clinch the invalidity of opposing views by showing that they led to atheism, so in the party disputes of the time, it was sufficient for any position to be plausibly charged with having anti-Leninist or even non-Leninist implications, to rule it out of consideration.

The "New Economic Policy," (NEP) was introduced by Lenin as a strategic retreat. It was adopted after the bankruptcy of War Communism, the Kronstadt revolt (1921) and a series of peasant uprisings. The policy was never intended to be permanent; it was to provide a breathing spell to an exhausted country. Future developments were not spelled out clearly. The new policy was designed to give the Party freedom of action to move towards its original goals at a pace and in a manner dependent upon the international situation; possible revolutionary developments abroad, so long delayed; and domestic recovery. It was Bukharin's great merit that *he* proposed to make of the NEP a fundamental revision of the Communist road to socialism. It is *he* not Lenin who is the father of what has come to be called the movement towards "socialism with a human face."

For Bukharin, collaboration—not struggle—between the proletariat and the peasant was to be the process of moving forward. In that process the security and self-enrichment of the peasantry were to be encouraged and not to be viewed with suspicion as "a return to capitalism." Despite occasional lapses, Bukharin did not jettison any of the old terms and categories of Marxist-Leninism especially after Trotsky, who regarded Bukharin's ideology as more dangerous and heretical than Stalin's, opened his offensive. Otherwise he could hardly count on getting a hearing.

Like so many other reformers before him in the history of politics and religion, he poured the new wine into the old bottles with the old labels. Of course, the class struggle or class war could not be suspended any more than the state power, which grew out of class conflicts, could be dissolved. But "struggle" and "war" now meant merely competition. Private trade would gradually be displaced or reduced in the competition of the market. Capitalist enterprises would be defeated not by expropriation, unfair taxation, requisitions, but by state and cooperative enterprises in both city and country. If enterprises in private hands proved stronger, this would not constitute a danger of "return to capitalism" since the reins of political power were exclusively in the hands of the Communist Party. It would mean more or better goods for the consumer until state and cooperative enterprises became more efficient and caught up.

BUKHARIN'S ELABORATE account of growing into socialism through expansion of the small and relatively free market economy was a far cry, modest as it was, from the marketless planned economy of Lenin's thought. Professor Cohen gives an excellent account of Bukharin's economic ideas. He also recognises that these far-reaching changes in economic policy entailed far-reaching correlative changes in political theory and practice. After recounting the differences in political approach called for by the profound shift in Bukharin's economic position, he summarises:

> If the new economics was evolutionary, the new politics was pedagogical—paternalistic, benevolent, gentle.

The words are well chosen—"paternalistic", "benevolent", and "gentle." But is it plausible to assume that they faithfully reflect what Lenin had in mind in the light of what we know about him? Did the new economics and the new politics proposed by Bukharin really stem (as Cohen and other scholars believe) from the last five short pieces Lenin published;—*Pages from a Diary; On Cooperation; Our Revolution; How We Should Reorganize the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection; Better Fewer, but Better*. . . ?

I HAVE PORED OVER these articles many times on various occasions since they were published. The most important of them are *On Cooperation* and *Better Fewer, but Better*. I do not find Bukharin's programme in them either implicitly or explicitly.

In all of these essays the relevant passages show clearly that Lenin regards the NEP as transitional, a kind of holding action. His whole conception of cooperatives differs from that of Bukharin. His cooperatives are outright socialist cooperatives, since "the land on which they stand and the means of production belong to the state, *i.e.*, the working class," Rents for their use depend completely on

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the decision of government agencies as well as the continuity of their operation, There is no provision for the genuine competition that Bukharin stressed. There is really no free market since the dependence of the cooperatives for all sorts of raw materials and tools is complete. And indeed, if the cooperatives were given the relative autonomy and independence to make decisions in order to meet the needs of the market, especially the peasant market, how could Soviet industry plan properly?

All genuine competition involves potential waste of resources—material and human. Lenin emphasises the importance of culturally uplifting the workers, pruning the bureaucracy, economising on costs, retaining the working-class leadership of the peasants and winning their confidence —for what purpose? First, to "ensure our resistance" in the forthcoming conflict between "the counter-revolutionary imperialist West" and "the revolutionary and nationalist East" (the reference is to Asia). Second, "to develop large-scale machine industry, to develop electrification, the hydraulic extraction of peat, to finish the construction Volkhovstroi, etc."

It is not surprising therefore that Trotsky and Stalin could cite the same writings as Bukharin in bitterly contesting his proposed road to socialism by civil peace. Lenin concludes his article on the reorganisation of Workers' and Peasants' Inspection with a call for vigilance against "the new bourgeois—the Nepman", lest their activities "drive a wedge" between the workers and peasants, split them apart, and threaten the survival of the Republic. With fears of this sort preying on his mind, is it likely that Lenin would encourage the kind of competition between the private and public sector that Bukharin envisaged?

THERE IS ONE COMPELLING REASON, it seems to me, why Lenin would not have approved of Bukharin's proposals had he known of them. It is a reason that must have motivated to some extent the intensity of the opposition of many of Bukharin's critics. It is reflected in the frequency of the charge of "Menshevism" against him. The practical upshot of Bukharin's proposals (not of course, the rhetoric of his goals) would have resulted in a kind of society in large outlines not too different from the programmatic perspectives of the socialist parties that controlled the Constituent Assembly. In that case how could the agonies of the October Revolution and the civil war have been justified? Such a question could not be far from the consciousness of the Bolshevik leaders since the socialist critics of Lenin had warned against the folly of force-marching a backward country unripe for any type of socialism into the classless future. If there was any criticism to which Lenin was especially sensitive, it was precisely this one, hurled at him in a thousand variations by Kautsky, Plekhanov, and the other doyens of Social-Democracy. Like a man nursing a sore tooth whose tongue keeps touching it, Lenin reverts to this criticism again and again. In his *Our Revolution*, his vexation and uneasiness are quite apparent. He repeats once more his defence of the Bolshevik *coup d'état* and jeeringly recalls the objection:

> "Russia has not attained the level of development of productive forces that makes socialism possible. . . . They keep repeating this incontrovertible proposition over and over again. . . ."

Lenin does not deny the truth of this "incontrovertible" proposition. He merely denies the political corollaries Marx drew from it.

> "If a definite level of culture is required for the *building of socialism*, [Lenin asks] *why* cannot we begin by *first* achieving the prerequisites for that definite level of culture in a revolutionary way, and *then* with the aid of the workers' and peasants' government and the Soviet system, proceed to overtake the other nations?"

Nothing, of course, is in the way—except all the cardinal principles of Marx's historical materialism which Lenin would no more think of renouncing than the Pope the principles of Christianity. And beyond these principles, are the commonsense considerations of human cost, and all the historical evidence that led Marx to proclaim that "social existence determines consciousness", not conversely.

HOW FAR LENIN DEPARTED FROM MARX is evident in his prediction that socialist revolutions could succeed even in the "Oriental countries," whose social, economic and technological conditions were even more backward and diverse than those of Russia.

> "Where, in what books, have you read that such variations of the customary, historical order are impermissible or impossible? Napoleon, one recalls, wrote: *On s'engage et puit . . . on voit*."

Lenin understood Napoleon no better than he did Marx. Napoleon was referring to the outcome of the battle once one has engaged. He was warning not only against excessive caution but against over-confidence and the easy predictions of assured victory. He himself never willingly engaged before he thought he was ready. Lenin reads him as if he was willing to engage at any time under any conditions.

Marx was aware that objective conditions could be ripe for socialism and yet the socialist revolution would not take place or fail if it did. His point against Blanqui, Bakunin and other extreme voluntarists was that in the absence of those objective conditions, the revolution would fail. Whether Lenin and Stalin between them

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proved that Marx was wrong or whether the society of which they are the chief architects, despite its remarkable achievements, vindicated Marx's insights depends on what we understand by socialism. This is a complex theme that need not be developed here.

It goes without saying that the contumely and abuse poured upon Bukharin, after Stalin turned against him, was as grotesque and as unmerited as that directed against Trotsky earlier. But there was some justice in the persistent accusation that his road to socialism was a variant of the Social-Democratic road, something of which Trotsky in opposition was rarely accused. One marked feature of Bukharin's description of the road was the absence of the element of *terror* in his approach to the socialist goal. It would tend to confirm the suspicion of old Bolsheviks, travel-hardened in Lenin's party, that Bukharin meant to abandon despite his protestations, the dictatorship of the Party.

THERE ARE TWO generic views about terror and its function in the consolidation of Soviet rule. The first is that under Lenin it was primarily defensive, a consequence of civil war, gradually becoming peripheral to Soviet life until Stalin abolished the NEP and began his "revolution from above." From the moment that Stalin became the dominant figure until shortly after his death, terror became central in the mechanism of Soviet rule. Stalinism is pictured as a degeneration, a corruption or a betrayal of Leninism. The second view sees in Stalin the continuation and intensification of the system of terror introduced by Lenin and justified by him. The chief difference between them consists in the fact that Stalin used the awful engines of repression not only against "the class enemy" but against Communists, too, and used them so capriciously and with a ferocity so devoid of any rhyme or reason as to raise questions about his sanity.

Obviously both views are oversimplifications. They may exclude each other but they do not exhaust other more qualified interpretations of the role of terror in Bolshevik theory and practice, and the respective responsibilities of Lenin and Stalin for the horrifying record which Solzhenitsyn has unrolled before the world in his *Gulag Archipelago*.

Certain important distinctions are not always observed. It is one thing to discuss the logic of abstract concepts unrelated to specific contexts. It is quite another to uncover the logic of ideas in action when they are used as weapons in historical situations by passionate, and often ignorant, protagonists.

In pure logic the historic guilt of a class can be distinguished from the guilt of individual members of the class; in actuality one cannot destroy *a class* without crushing *individuals* who are morally blameless for their social position. In pure logic one can sharply distinguish between evil terroristic means and ideal ends; in the logic of action the moral quality of the means infects the moral quality of the ends when it does not determine them. In pure logic a complete collectivism is not incompatible with unlimited democracy; in actuality, so long as selfishness remains unenlightened, the allocation of material resources and human labour required for planning may involve some coercion. In pure logic a one-party state, like a benign patriarch of a large family, can be tolerant of differences among party members and the community at large; the logic of political experience shows that where public expression of differences of opinion is not tolerated *outside* the party, it is soon suppressed *within* the party, lest a split develop.

Bolshevik thinking about terror was a compound of certain traditional elements of Marxism, a reading of history in terms of the "inexorable law of the class struggle", a feeling that the white terror of the past, of bourgeois society, morally justified the red terror of the present, and the arrogant and question-begging assertion that any resistance to the Bolshevik seizure of power, and to its draconic decrees, was opposition to the will of the proletariat and the ultimate good of mankind of which the Communist Party was the guardian and executor.

Engels' view that all morality is class morality—which contradicts many other things he says that have genuine moral import—is very difficult to defend in the light of reflective judgment. Even more difficult to square with the conclusions of moral consciousness is the Bolshevik amendment that the Communist Party is the best judge of the interests of the working class, and that its survival, integrity, and victory are the *sine qua non* of realising socialism, the objectively good society. Lenin defines the right as any action that contributes to the victory of the working class, and since only the Communist Party knows in what this consists and how to bring it about, anything

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is right that helps the Party to achieve and retain its power. Taken together with Lenin's concept of dictatorship as "rule based directly upon force and unrestricted by any laws" it opens up awesome possibilities of systematic oppression.

IDEAS SUCH AS THESE were the common premises of all the Bolshevik leaders in their rationalisations of terror—not only of Lenin and Stalin but, in a more sophisticated form, of Trotsky, and of Bukharin who indignantly repudiated the charge that Bolshevik morality was on logical par with Hottentot morality, since the Bolsheviks were struggling for a new, higher classless society. "What helps in the struggle is good; whatever hinders is bad." But unless the classless society has a classless moral validity, unless there are other valid moral ideals beyond the struggle *that may not be violated* by the means necessary to win the struggle, then we have the law of the jungle. It is a law that can be used to justify anything. It differs from Smerdyakov's dictum, "All things are permissible", only in the qualification; if it leads to victory or avoids defeat.

However, just because we are dealing with a common premise, it is not sufficient to explain the differences in the behaviour of those who subscribed to it, notably Lenin and Stalin. Other considerations must enter—differences in personality, differences in objective conditions, differences in the perceived or suspected danger to the Soviet state. That is why the two easy interpretations of the relationship between Lenin and Stalin concerning the use of terror must be rejected. Lenin could plead the exigencies of Civil War to extenuate his terrorist acts in a way that Stalin couldn't. This is in no way an absolution. For most of the victims of Lenin's terror were not active participants in the Civil War but members of social groups and classes regarded as hostile. There were many acts of repression launched *before* the Civil War developed on a large scale. The Bolsheviks speak of the Civil War as if it were an unprovoked attack against a legitimate régime. But it was they who precipitated the civil strife by forcibly dissolving the Constituent Assembly whose convocation they had demanded previously, and by outlawing a major political party as "Enemies of the People" whose members were to be shot (often with their families) on sight.

THERE WAS A CRUELTY and ruthlessness about Lenin's behaviour towards anyone he regarded as a political enemy or even as an obstacle to his goals of the moment. He openly declared, long before his party seized power, that in the event of a split—when political friends and allies become political opponents—"I shall always conduct a war of extermination" against them, and use measures "not to convince . . . but to destroy them." At the time he was out to destroy their characters and reputations but subsequently he did not hesitate to imprison them and sometimes destroy their persons. Shortly after taking power, before the civil war began, he called on every village and town to destroy as they would "noxious insects" all persons guilty of "any sort of resistance" to the Bolshevik programme. Workers in the factories were required to set up terror detachments to go marauding and hunt down "speculators" and shoot them "on the spot . . . if caught with the goods." Workshops that fail to do this "will be deprived of bread cards and subjected to revolutionary measures of persuasion and punishment."

Here is a characteristic passage, written on 25 December 1917, *before* the Constituent Assembly was forcibly dissolved and the Civil War began. It is well to remember that "the rich" is a very elastic category in Lenin's writings and includes all members of the family; and that by "rogues" he means "lackeys of the bourgeoisie; saboteurs who call themselves intellectuals."

> Thousands of practical forms and methods of accounting and controlling the rich, the rogues, and the idlers should be devised and put to a practical test by the communes themselves, by small units in town and country. Variety is a guarantee of virility here, a pledge of success in achieving the single common aim—to *purge* the land of Russia of all vermin, of fleas—the rogues, of bugs—the rich, and so on and so forth. In one place half a score of rich, a dozen rogues, half a dozen workers who shirk their work (in the hooligan manner in which many compositors in Petrograd, particularly in the Party printing shops, shirk their work) will be put in prison. In another place they will be put to cleaning latrines. In a third place they will be provided with "yellow tickets" after they have served their time, so that all the people shall have them under surveillance, as *harmful* persons, until they reform. In a fourth place, one out of every ten idlers will will be shot on the spot. . . .[3]

These sentiments were not merely morale-building propaganda. Others acted upon them in a manner that Lenin may not have approved. But there is no evidence that he ever rebuked them. On the other hand, we know that it was Lenin who formulated the paragraph in the Criminal Code, forerunner of the infamous paragraph 58 of Stalin's time, which decreed "execution by shooting" for all activities of the Mensheviks, Social Revolutionaries, etc., including simple speech, as well as to persons "capable [!] of assisting" organisations hostile to the

[3] V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, Part 1, p. 376 (Foreign Language Publishing House, Moscow, 1951).

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Communist Party. After the NEP, he expressed indignant surprise that anyone should protest at the execution of those guilty of the heinous offence of *saying* that the NEP was a retreat to capitalism. His surprise seems quite genuine and is an eloquent indication of how natural ruthless terror as a social policy appeared to him. It was under Lenin that Maria Spiridonova, who turned against the Bolsheviks after Brest-Litovsk, was confined to a mental hospital.

This profound indifference, if not contempt, by the revered leader of the party for human beings who got in the way of his social vision could not but have influenced the climate of opinion and helped determine the attitudes and behaviour of many of its members. It could be matched by remarks after Kronstadt of Trotsky, whose whole philosophy of history reflects a callousness to the victims on what Hegel calls "the slaughter-benches" of progress. In his *Autobiography* Trotsky observes "it is certainly victims that move humanity forward." Presumably the more victims, the greater the progress.

BUKHARIN EMERGES from the pages of Cohen's biography as one who was much more aware of the human costs of "progress", by natural disposition more genial and kindly than his colleagues. Despite his doctrinal orthodoxy on the necessity of terror, he himself probably would not have initiated or executed the terrorist measures of Lenin, Trotsky or Stalin. We know that he refused to defame the Kronstadt sailors although he apparently approved of their suppression. He was reluctant to endorse Stalin's administrative measures against the Left-Opposition. But he never had the gumption to take a principled stand against them or against the unjustified repressions under Lenin. After the attempt on Lenin's life, thousands of people who had been previously arrested on all sorts of unrelated charges and who, languishing in prison, could not have been even remotely involved in the action of a half-crazed woman, were none the less shot without trial. No protest was ever made by Bukharin.

It is this failure to take a principled public stand against any of the terroristic practices under Lenin and Stalin that makes his obvious personal distaste for bloodshed and violence against dissenters seem to be a sentimental failing, a weakness in an otherwise tough Bolshevik. Had the Communist Party followed his moderate policies, how would Bukharin have behaved if the pace of advance dragged, if the socialist sector were getting the worst of it in the competition with the private sector? He would never have gone as far as Stalin, but it is not excluded that he would publicly have gone along with the stern disciplinary measures sure to be proposed by others nurtured in the Leninist tradition.

NONE THE LESS, even if we sharply distinguish between Bukharin and other Bolshevik leaders, we cannot regard the latter as a homogeneous group. Stalin was by all odds, from what we know of both his private and public life, the worst of all. He added a dimension to terror that went beyond anything that Lenin ever conceived, a dimension whose techniques and ramifications seem unprecedented in the history of man's inhumanity to man. Had Lenin lived and opted for Trotsky's line (a line that Trotsky to the end insisted was closer to that of Lenin's than any other), immense sufferings would undoubtedly have been imposed on the Russian people as well as on those of other nations. But it is as certain as anything can be in human affairs that the machinery of terror would not have been turned against the party or the security and military forces. Lenin was much more intelligent and much less vindictive than Stalin. He was furious with, and intolerant of, error. He was content, however, with the acknowledgment of error. He was vindictive with a kind of abstract historical passion against whole classes rather than against individual persons. Although ruthless and amoral, his judgments were strictly functional. He could match anyone in loud outcries about justice and injustice, if it helped to get or keep power. And with an eye on cavilling moralists, he could always rationalise an injustice in the present by balancing it against an injustice of the past even if it was necessary to go back to the French Revolution or the Paris Commune to do so, although on his class and party view of the good and the right, he was not entitled to make such comparisons.

IN CONTRADISTINCTION to Lenin, the irrationality of Stalin's terrorism with respect to his own announced goals is so striking that, like Hitler's, it must be regarded as psycho-pathological. He was luckier than Hitler in escaping the consequences of his monumental follies and crimes—saved by a bounteous harvest at one time, by Hitler's own insanities at another, and the Japanese Army's Zen-Buddhist mentality that foreclosed the two-front war in the offing. What we know about the mad tyrants of antiquity depends largely on legend. The facts about Stalin can hardly be disputed; and those that have not yet been revealed will probably add to his guilt rather than mitigate it. If any man deserves the sobriquet "the Iago of history", it is Stalin.

In saying this it is not necessary to impute to Stalin complete and sole responsibility for the

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oceans of suffering he unloosed not only against the Russian people but against every other national group under his sway. For a man who sowed so much evil, who (according to Khrushchev) inspired paralysing fear in his closest subordinates whenever they entered his presence, it is a miracle that he died in his bed. That he was able to succeed with complete immunity in his strategies of terror—his death prevented another massive purge—indicates that a considerable number of people in the Soviet Union had a vested interest in the system sufficient to deter them from stopping it. The vastness, pervasiveness, and continuity of the terror meant that for hundreds of thousands it must have been a way of life even if they did not directly bloody their hands in its operation. Perhaps the explanation of the halt in the process of de-Stalinisation begun by Khrushchev (and the answer to Solzhenitsyn's plaintive question why so few of the specialists of torture have been brought to justice) lies in the very number of those personally involved—beyond the call of duty—in Stalin's infamies. Since none of them can claim to have been critics of what they participated in, why should they incur the odium of publicity as well as the loss of the material perquisites of their collaboration?

LENIN MUST ANSWER for Stalin, but not for everything Stalin did. He must answer for establishing the system that made Stalin possible. He must answer for forging a party that made Stalin "actual" as its Secretary and the most powerful man in it after Lenin himself. Finally, he must answer for a mode of thought, a social voluntarism so extreme that it burst all the reasonable bounds of Marxism and led Stalin to glorify the armed will as the driving force of social change. There are echoes of the Lenin of the October days in the famous passage from one of Stalin's minions, on the eve of the revolution from above, although Lenin's sturdy common sense would have hedged it with qualifications:

> "Our task is not to study economics but to change it. We are bound by no laws. There are no fortresses which the Bolsheviks cannot storm. The question of tempo is subjected to decision by human beings."
> (S. G. SHUMILIN)

THE ENTIRE DISCUSSION of the course of the Russian Revolution and the attribution of responsibility to Lenin and/or Stalin for its development, presupposes that it is both intelligible and instructive to ask hypothetical questions contrary to fact. It is astonishing how often estimable historians who make skilful use of "*if*" questions deny that it makes any sense to raise them. Perhaps I should have posed this issue at the outset. It is appropriate to consider it at the close, as we consider the fall of "the last Bolshevik", as Stephen Cohen refers to Bukharin, thus underscoring his continuity with the position of Lenin. Professor Cohen quite clearly believes that had Bukharin's policies been adopted by the Russian Communist Party, the whole course of Soviet history, economics, politics and culture, which we associate with the triumph of Stalinism, would have been quite different. Although the precise details of the alternative development cannot be described, the Russian people would have been spared the worst features of Stalin's régime. I agree with this, but not with the judgment that Bukharin's policies were Lenin's and that he (not Stalin or Trotsky) was the true heir of Lenin's revolutionary legacy. Professor Leonard Schapiro, whose writings combine in exemplary fashion scientific objectivity and insight with compassion for the victims of historical cruelty and injustice, concurs with both judgments of Cohen's. This adds great but not conclusive weight to Cohen's thesis. Curiously enough, however, in his very sympathetic comments on Cohen's book, Professor Schapiro writes (*New York Review of Books*, 2 February 1974):

> The historian cannot say what might have been since it is impossible to assess all the consequences that would eventually have flowed from a certain course of action had it been taken at a certain moment of time. On the other hand, human reason instinctively revolts against accepting the argument that a policy involving the massacre of tens of millions of innocent people and an internal upheaval of which the traces are fully evident over forty years later can ever be regarded as either realistic or necessary.

Surely the second sentence contradicts the first. To deny that the massacre of millions of innocent Russians was either realistic or necessary is to assert that *if* some other policy had been adopted this horrible outcome would not have occurred.

Of course, we need not claim to know with certainty all the consequences that would have eventually have flowed from a certain course of action had it been taken at a certain moment in time. All we need claim with respect to some important consequences is that they probably would not have occurred, and that some other consequences probably would have occurred if another policy had been followed. Indeed, an historian or any person delivering a considered judgment cannot make a causal attribution to any event or individual without implying at the same time what would have resulted if the event or action had *not* occurred. For to say that x is the cause of y is to say that in the absence of x, y probably would not have occurred in the manner and time that it did. The complexities of an adequate causal analysis are formidable but they do not gainsay the truth that all intelligent dis-

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cussion of policy, past or present, assumes that we can rationally say not only what might have been, and sometimes even what would have been, but also what might be and sometimes what will be. If we can never say this, then we can never explain anything.

The issue has more than theoretical importance. For if we cannot intelligibly raise "*if*" questions and intelligently answer them, how can we ever learn from the past? It may be that history is so discontinuous that we cannot learn anything about the past except, as Hegel put it, that we cannot learn from the past. But we can learn more than that. Among the things we can learn are the probable costs and consequences of forcibly attempting to introduce socialism in underdeveloped countries.

LIKE ANY HISTORIAN who accepts some form of determinism, Marx was not wrong in denying that all things are possible in history. Nor was he wrong in predicting that socialism as he understood it could not be developed in a country that lacked the economic and cultural prerequisites for it. He was wrong in not predicting that the attempt would be made, and that a new type of society, neither capitalist nor socialist, would result from it. Among the many merits of Professor Cohen's study of Bukharin and the Russian Revolution is that its scholarly findings leave in the sensitive reader the same impression that he will gather, with an immeasurably stronger force, from reading Solzhenitsyn. It is that if our choice were restricted—as happily it is not—between present-day democratic capitalist welfare states with all their many imperfections and any society like that of the Soviet Union, regardless of whether Stalin was one of the regnant deities within it, the Communist option would be shudderingly rejected.

Poor

Money deserts
And everything dispossesses us.
Our emotions are taken off
To the used racks
And hang there in brick dust,
Unclaimed.

All our mail comes
Postage due
And the Postman holds it out
Then pulls it back,
For payment
Taking a door, or a brick.

Books we have not paid for
Swallow our words
For blank pages.

I do not know
What I have ever seen
But somewhere
There is a box of slides
Whose price was quite high.

Sitting on a blade of grass
I have taken with me illegally
I watch
While someone disconnects
The blue bulb of the sky.

Susan Schaeffer

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LETTERS

FitzGibbon's "Norman Douglas"

READERS OF Constantine FitzGibbon's brilliant piece about Norman Douglas in your September issue may be interested to know that the authorised biography of Douglas is now in preparation. This biography is written by Mark Holloway, who had full access to all Douglas's papers and the cooperation, until he died, of Kenneth Macpherson, Douglas's literary executor and close friend. My firm will be publishing this biography in the second half of 1975.

T. G. ROSENTHAL

Secker & Warburg,
London

CONSTANTINE FITZGIBBON'S memories of Norman Douglas will be read by many people who are not otherwise familiar with Douglas, with enjoyment. I certainly enjoyed hearing them from FitzGibbon himself when he kindly agreed to meet me when I was collecting information for a biography of Douglas (which, after many delays, should be ready for publication soon). He generously entertained me to luncheon and told me the substance of what he has now written here. For this generosity I am in his debt, which I gladly and gratefully acknowledge.

In spite of this, I feel bound to point out, especially to those who are not familiar with Douglas or his work, that much of what FitzGibbon has now committed to print consists simply of gossip, not fact, and that several of the apparent facts are inaccuracies. There are ten or a dozen of these, too tedious to list, though I will supply them on request. More seriously, there are slurs on character, casually and gratuitously handed out for no other purpose, it would seem, than to appeal to devotees of scandal. "The late Kenneth Macpherson, though a homosexual, had married two millionairesses"—this statement, even if true in its entirety, which is questionable (though not a matter to be discussed in public) is very unpleasantly expressed; and as the only comment in the article on a man who went out of his way to do a great deal for Douglas over a period of years, seems at least mean. And is it really necessary to drag in that antediluvian and totally irrelevant remark about Cyril Connolly? Risky, too, surely, to start throwing stones of that kind, when almost all of us, unless we are Adonises, live in glass houses.

But above all, FitzGibbon's remarks about Orioli must not be allowed to pass without comment. They could suggest to the reader unacquainted with Orioli someone very different from the actual man—the friend and confidant of D. H. Lawrence (who was notoriously fussy in this respect) and the first person to whom his widow turned for help after Lawrence's death; the publisher of (or, more properly, the manager for publishing) the original *Lady Chatterley's Lover*; the publisher of other books by Lawrence, and by Maugham and Aldington, as well as by Douglas; a bookseller of international repute and integrity; a man of childlike and transparent affection, tender-hearted and emotionally generous, as well as being ribald and scurrilous in a generally harmless way, not, as might be imagined from FitzGibbon's account, for hard graft; and never anywhere near the main road, let alone the gutters, of pornography.

Douglas told FitzGibbon that he could write anything he liked about him "so long as it's the truth." Fair enough. But how can one discover the truth without looking for it carefully and thoroughly? FitzGibbon, by his own admission, does not seem to have looked for it—as far as this article is concerned—even casually, nor to care very much whether he has done so or not. When the inaccuracies already mentioned are added to the clumsy or intentional suggestiveness, and the two are combined with the fact that FitzGibbon made his name as a novelist, dare we believe anything in his article that cannot be proved outside it? At best, his is the "novelist's touch" to which Douglas himself objected; at worse, it is scandalmongering, easy enough to make allowances for in conversation, but not so easy to wipe off the record once it has appeared in print. This is all the more regrettable coming from a man who wrote so well and seriously of his subject on a previous occasion.

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Fishpond, Charmouth,
Bridport, Dorset

MR MARK HOLLOWAY tells us that he is writing an absolutely factual, meticulously researched biography of Norman Douglas. He accuses me of having failed to do the same. This shows how hard his task must be, since he failed to understand my meaning when I stated explicitly, and my article shows implicitly, that I was attempting to describe my failure to write a biography of Norman Douglas *at all*. I trust he has less difficulty in understanding his other written sources.

Furthermore, a man of such impeccable attention to detail should get his facts right, all his facts. I gave him dinner, not as he puts it luncheon. As he would be the first to exclaim, such an error can in his eyes destroy a writer's entire credibility.

Finally he states that a novelist is incapable of writing a biography, surely a remarkable point of view. He, on the other hand, claims to understand with apparent infallibility the mutual emotions of persons he never met. He certainly failed to understand mine when I "generously entertained him to luncheon." I trust I treated him with courtesy, and since he says so I assume that I paid the bill, but I can assure any future historian that when that interminable meal was at last over my emotions were not solely those of "generosity." But then since he is not hampered by a novelist's insight, he doubtless knows more about my emotions than do I.

CONSTANTINE FITZGIBBON

St Ann's,
Killiney Hill Road,
Co. Dublin

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Günter Grass & Andrey Sinyavsky . . .

DEAR ANDREY SINYAVSKY,
DEAR ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN,

I have been asked by the director of the Ullstein-Verlag, Wolf Jobst Siedler, to write a few words of welcome to the new journal Kontinent *with which you are associated. And inasmuch as I—along with many of my fellow-writers in Western Europe—sympathised with your plight and tried our best to help when you were being persecuted and sentenced and imprisoned, or being prevented from working as professional writers in the Soviet Union, I take the liberty of telling you, without mincing words, what I think of your project.*

It should, after all, be known to you that as authors in the journal Kontinent *you will be working together with a certain power empire, famous under the name of the Springer-Konzern, whose reactionary intolerance is an expression of the same mentality which, under different ideological markings, forced you in the Soviet Union to protest and to resist.*

I cannot understand how you, as writers with moral criteria, could through such a collaboration offer support to a power complex so dangerous to Western democracy. Each day in the publications of the Springer-Konzern (whether they're called "Bild-Zeitung" or "Welt am Sonntag") there is disseminated exactly that which you experienced in the Soviet Union, if in totalitarian extent, namely, falsification of information according to doctrinaire opinions, demonisation of political opponents, appeal to the latent violence in the so-called silent majority, the condemnation of the accused as already guilty—all of which has led your fellow-writers to feel anxious about the future of democracy in the Bundesrepublik. *In terms of politics the ideological anti-Communism of the Springer-Konzern is only a reflex action in response to Leninism-Stalinism; and just as Western private capitalism and Communist state capitalism can find themselves united throughout the world when it comes to blocking a third way and to repressing—whether in Chile in 1973, or in Czechoslovakia in 1968—democratic socialism, so is the Springer-Konzern a part of that Power of Money or Statism, whose corrupt activities both you and I fear so much.*

Must one, in order to express a justified opposition to totalitarian communism, seek support from those forces who were never seriously annoyed by Western dictatorships and who in anti-Communist blindness are altogether prepared to drive out the communist Devil with the fascist Beelzebub?

For all my respect for the courage which you demonstrated in the Soviet Union in your struggle against an autocratic State power, I cannot approve your cooperation with the Springer-Konzern. I beg you to reconsider your venture. You are keeping very bad company.

With friendly greetings,

Yours,

Günter Grass

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* *Among the publishers of other European editions of* Kontinent *are: Gallimard (Paris), Mondadori (Milan), André Deutsch (London).*

DEAR GÜNTER GRASS,

I found it very strange to read, in your open letter to Alexander Solzhenitsyn and myself, that we who will be contributing to the new journal, Kontinent, *would be collaborating with certain dark forces and with the "power empire" of Axel Springer, and thereby becoming, if unwittingly, accomplices of fascism.*

I am not very well acquainted with the situation in the West. I have no experience at all of the conflicts within Western democratic societies, and it is not really my business to conduct investigations into this or that publishing house, or this or that "moneyed power", in order to decide whose financial support may be better or worse. Your apparent point of departure is a partisan struggle between various groups. But our concern, mine and those of my friends, is simply the magazine,* Kontinent, *itself. Our venture is, to my mind, a challenging and promising beginning—a journal which attempts to bring together a whole group of writers in Eastern and Western Europe, among them not a few in Russia whose work is done in the shadow of the prisons, camps, and lunatic asylums.*

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. . . A Controversial Exchange

This, our new journal, which wants in a democratic spirit to keep strictly above all parties, is now being helped by the old and traditional German publishing house of Ullstein-Propylaën—a house which was destroyed by the Hitler régime.† And it is a publishing house which asks nothing of us; there are no guide-lines, and we shall write as we please. Or can it be that you actually believe that we can be made to dance to somebody's tune? Do you doubt that it will be the shared ideals of liberty, generosity, and tolerance which will shape our editorial cooperation?

THE PHRASE *"Springer-Konzern" comes from your lips in a very malicious tone—not unlike the phrases about the "Tito-Clique" or "the Fascist de Gaulle" with which they used to frighten us so long in Russia. Again, without going into the affairs of the "Konzern", for I know little about them, I would like to observe that this "bad company," even if one were to judge them by the criteria of your letter, has not killed a single author or sent one poet to a concentration camp. Your comparison of the activities of the "Springer Group" with the publishing conditions of present-day Soviet Russia, with the ruling state system bent on destroying all dissidents, is—forgive me—simply scandalous.*

Your point of reference is a pile of opinionated newspaper clippings which you found unjustifiable. But our point of reference is a mountain of corpses, and among them writers and poets. Can it really be that you equate a Hitler or a Stalin with a distasteful polemic in a newspaper?

Can it be that you do not know that the whole press, including all publishers of books and magazines, in present-day Soviet Russia is not only under the complete financial control of the Central Committee's Department of Agitation and Propaganda, but under its total ideological (and physical) domination, bolstered up by the State Security forces deployed to keep an eye on all the works of Soviet writers? The free writer in present-day Russia is put on a par with the criminal and the lunatic.

BUT THESE ARE *supposed to be "liberalising" days. Yet I am afraid I cannot see the least comparison between an honourable Western publishing house and the Soviet secret police (and it is the same secret police which controls cultural life in the East European lands). You once came to my personal defence, and I will always remember it with gratitude. But had you been sentenced for this personal and individual opinion to seven years in a work camp (as was the case with Alexander Ginsburg or with Yuri Galanskov, who died in camp), then I think you would appreciate a little better the distinction between publishing in East and West.*

The journal Kontinent *is an independent publication, planning a cultural and editorial programme of great breadth and variety. It is completely beyond my comprehension why you should feel it necessary to speak out against a venture which has not even seen the light of day—to disrupt a magazine whose first number you have not yet read and whose quality you presume to judge only by the imprint of the publishing house.*

What would you think of Russian readers of Western books—from Faulkner to Böll—who passed judgment on writers and works without having read them, and only on the basis of the imprint of the Soviet periodical or publisher who happened to put them out (always, of course, by permission of the KGB)? The permission of the KGB, even when it comes to foreign authors, is surely stricter than the controls of any Western publishing house over any of its publications.

I can understand this much: that you think in other categories, that you concern yourself with who is behind what and why, and who in secrecy and with clever financial tactics influences political life. Back home it used to be referred to as "the claws of Imperialism", but in the meantime we have ceased to look at history with the eyes of a detective. We have gone through the concentration camps, and money will neither buy us nor intimidate us.

HERR GRASS, *why don't you and I talk about books, about writers and their works—and not about financial corporations. Not so long ago I was condemned because I had not only been published in the West but evidently also because I received no Western royalties. According to the logic of my Russian judges, I was writing my books not because I had sold myself (that would have been from their point of view more understandable and even forgivable), but—far worse—out of private impulse and hence inner malice.*

But I hope, and I share this with my colleagues on the journal Kontinent, *that on one point nothing will change to the end of our days: that we write according to our inner convictions.*

Respectfully yours,

Andrey Sinyavsky

† *Ullstein-Verlag, a German-Jewish Berlin publishing house, was liquidated by Goebbels during the Third Reich. It was returned after the War to the Ullstein family, who sold it to Springer in 1959.*

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Hong Kong

THE CULTURAL AMENITIES of Hong Kong are indeed pitifully few, but Jan Morris's statement [ENCOUNTER July] that Hong Kong has no museum needs correction.

There is, in fact, a museum and art gallery—admittedly small—in the City Hall complex on Hong Kong Island, which also contains a concert hall, theatre, and exhibition areas.

JOSEPHINE FALK

London

VELLY SOLLY—this Museum
so damn small Jan never see 'um.

Bath

The New Larkin

UNLIKE Mr Clive James (ENCOUNTER, September) who has had all too many occasions to note my "entrepreneurial interest in Montale"—by which he presumably means the first full-length article on the poet to appear in this country in a scholarly periodical (*Italian Studies*) in 1963, the first critical study of his entire work in English published by Yale University Press in 1973 and a number of reviews and translations of his prose and poetry published in between in *T.L.S.*, *London Magazine* and *Agenda*—I am afraid I had never come across Mr James's name or anything written by him until I read his review of Larkin's poetry. However, I am glad to note that out of the three points I made in my letter he is willing to stand corrected on two. And yet what a labour it costs him to acknowledge the simple fact that he did not know about the existence of Montale's fifth collection of poems *Diario del '71 e del '72*. For, while doing so, he adds characteristically: "it rather depends on what you call a collection." No, it doesn't, and to suggest it does is quite misleading. *Diario del '71 e del '72* is as much a collection as any one of the first four volumes of Montale's poetry.

As to my having questioned his assertion that Montale hated visiting England, instead of producing evidence from Montale's writing to show that he did, Mr James not only takes shelter behind what he admits might have been "a rare instance of interesting academic gossip", but he shifts his ground and now affirms that there is little in Montale's prose pieces "to indicate that he *liked* being there"—something that nobody had claimed to begin with.

Lastly my Montale translations. I quoted them only to rebut another categorical assertion of Mr James's—namely, that there is not the slightest point in translating Montale, and I quoted the three names —to which I could add others—to show that *they* did not think so. If this is displaying an "intensity of self-satisfaction", I admit to it unabashedly—and all the more so in view of someone, so easily taken in by "academic gossip" as Mr James is, dismissing at a stroke the opinions of C. Day Lewis, Robert Graves, and F. R. Leavis. But here too Mr James commits two errors—one factual and one of judgment. Far from being "inextricably mixed up with some dreary campaign" Dr Leavis is alleged to be waging against Eliot, his critique of *Xenia* was written at the specific request of the editor of *Nuova Antologia* for its special number dedicated to Montale, and it appeared there in Italian version months before appearing in *The Listener*. Now it is conceivable that Mr James may not have known this, having probably read Dr Leavis's critique, as perhaps Montale's poetry, for the first time in English. But for him to misconstrue the nature and spirit of that critique—comparable for its critical and analytical acumen to Dr Leavis's comment on Hardy's "After a Journey"—and to regard it as part of some dreary campaign against Eliot is to betray a curious insensitiveness to the nature of literary criticism as well as to that of the poetry in question.

In any case in my previous letter I had invoked Dr Leavis's name not for his views on Montale, but for what he thought of my translations of *Xenia*. But then for Mr James even Dr Leavis's view of my translations might well be part of "some dreary campaign he is waging against Eliot—a campaign which seems to involve discrediting Valéry"!

G. SINGH

The Queen's University,
Belfast

GRUDGINGLY I HAVE to admit that Professor Singh is right about the *Diario:* I have been back to Italy and read the book since I first left it out of account, and it is more like a collection of poems than I had heard—although nothing like the collection of poems its predecessors were. But as for the rest of Professor Singh's letter, if it doesn't demonstrate what I called his entrepreneurial interest, I don't know what does. The crack about my having first read Montale's poetry in English is a bad guess, incidentally. It wouldn't occur to me to think of a translation as a substitute for the original—which is really the point at issue. I said in my review of *High Windows* that the poetry was the part of the poem you can't translate. Until the advent of Professor Singh, even the best translators were usually ready to concede that this argument (it is not, after all, a new one) had force.

CLIVE JAMES

Cambridge

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Life & Letters Today

Madison, Wis.

COLLEGE BOY'S LIBRARY: *The Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English has produced a report based on a survey of books lecturers would like their students to have read before coming to college. Joint favourites topping the first list of 13 books were "Huckleberry Finn" by Mark Twain, which received 109 "votes", and the Bible (98).*

Then came Homer's "Iliad" (96), Dickens's "David Copperfield" (95), "Mythology" (Bulfinch, Gayley and Hamilton) (93), Swift's "Gulliver's Travels" (90), Homer's "Odyssey" (88), Twain's "Tom Sawyer" (88), Defoe's "Robinson Crusoe" (86), Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland" (81), Stevenson's "Treasure Island" (79), Steinbeck's 'Grapes of Wrath" (77) and Thoreau's "Walden" (76).

One of the Council's criticisms made of the list was that it contained books which "called for a maturity level beyond that of most college students."

DAILY TELEGRAPH

New York City

THE ODDS ON FAME: America seems to be producing ever greater numbers of notable people nowadays—or else to be recording them more diligently. The new "Who's Who in America," published this month, appears for the first time in two volumes, each almost as large as the old one-volume editions.

The chance of becoming famous, it appears, improves if your name begins with a letter early in the alphabet. Volume I covers 11 initial letters, A-K, while the considerably smaller Volume II, L-Z, covers 15.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

London

DEFECTOR: *Jestyn Reginald Austen Plantagenet Philipps, the Second Viscount St Davids, has resigned from the Labour Party.*

As his fourth Christian name indicates, he is descended from the Plantagenets through his mother and the Hastings line. That leads back to the Duke of Clarence, "false, fleeting, perjured Clarence", who is traditionally supposed to have been drowned in a butt of malmsey.

If Richard III had not lost his life and the Crown at the Battle of Bosworth, the Hastings family would have ascended the throne and, short of revolution, would probably still be sitting there today. Lord St Davids would not have been King, but a leading member of the royal family.

The family arms of "a lion rampant sable ducally gorged and chained or" were given by Richard Coeur de Lion to an ancestor for gallantry against the Saracens in the Holy Land.

The present Viscount St Davids is 57, having succeeded his father to the title in 1938. He was educated at Eton and Trinity, Cambridge, and has had a diverse career that has included being a mate in a sailing barge, a sergeant in the Army, a naval petty officer and a lieutenant in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve.

At the Labour Party press conference yesterday, Mr Wilson said about Lord St Davids's resignation: "It seems to me a case of Bertie Wooster rides again with a script partly written from "The Pallisers" *by Trollope. I think we shall just have to put up with it."*

In reply, Lord St Davids said: "I agree that it may sound like something out of Trollope, but as far as I know Bertie Wooster was never a socialist. Damn it, I have been a socialist all my political life and my voting record for the Labour Party in the House of Lords is second to none. . . ."

THE TIMES

Manchester

MEDICAL DICTIONARY: *People who cannot understand immigrant doctors should recognize that the doctor probably cannot understand them either, particularly on Merseyside or in Durham or Yorkshire, Dr Chitta Das, of Rossendale, Lancashire, told the conference of the Medical Commission on Accident Prevention at Manchester University yesterday.*

"So far as the average immigrant doctor is concerned, the English speak the worst English", he said.

Afterwards Dr Das, a doctor for 25 years, who trained in Calcutta, Liverpool and Edinburgh, said: "Indian and Pakistani doctors speak English as it is written in books and newspapers, but they do not understand colloquial English.

"When a patient says, 'Doctor, I feel awful' they are baffled because the word 'awful' has the connotation of being bad. It is a word Indian doctors would never use when speaking to each other."

Dr Das continued: "To say to a doctor newly arrived from India, 'I have a pain in my tummy,' would have him reach for his dictionary. These are the problems you cannot expect him to overcome immediately."

THE TIMES

New York City

ORWELLIAN: One recalls [William F. Buckley jr. writes] that haunted moment at Dartmouth University. It was (a) a few years after Orwell's sunburst, his novel "1984" depicting the grim character of the totalitarian system to come, the authority of which would go by the name of "Big Brother." And (b) a few months after the election of Dwight D. Eisenhower as President.

Ike went up to New Hampshire to address the students and, would you believe it, he told them that he wanted the government to be "nothing more than a Big Brother to them." It was then that Republicans reached the sorrowful conclusion that if Zane Grey hadn't written about it, Dwight Eisenhower wouldn't know about it.

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

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